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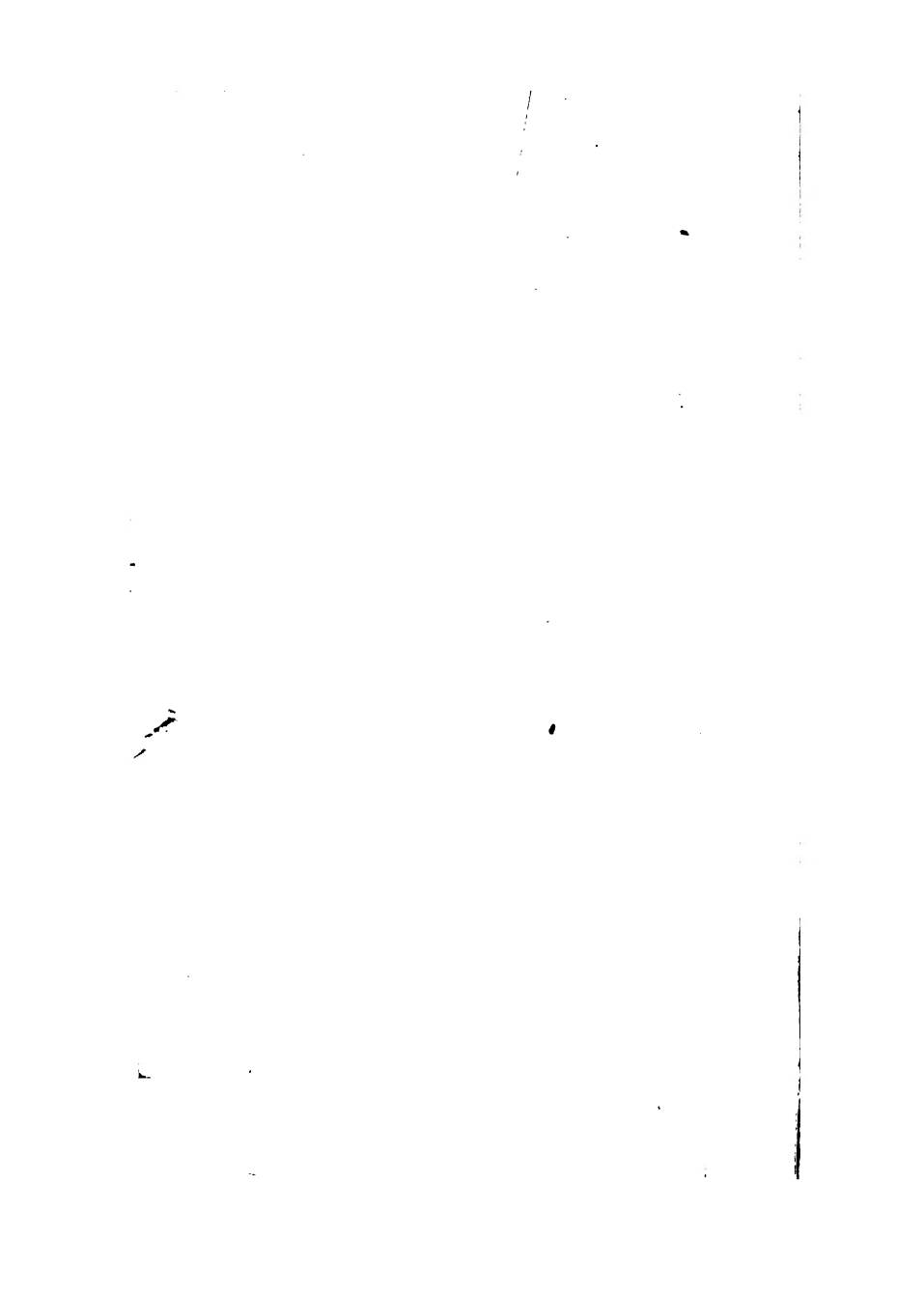


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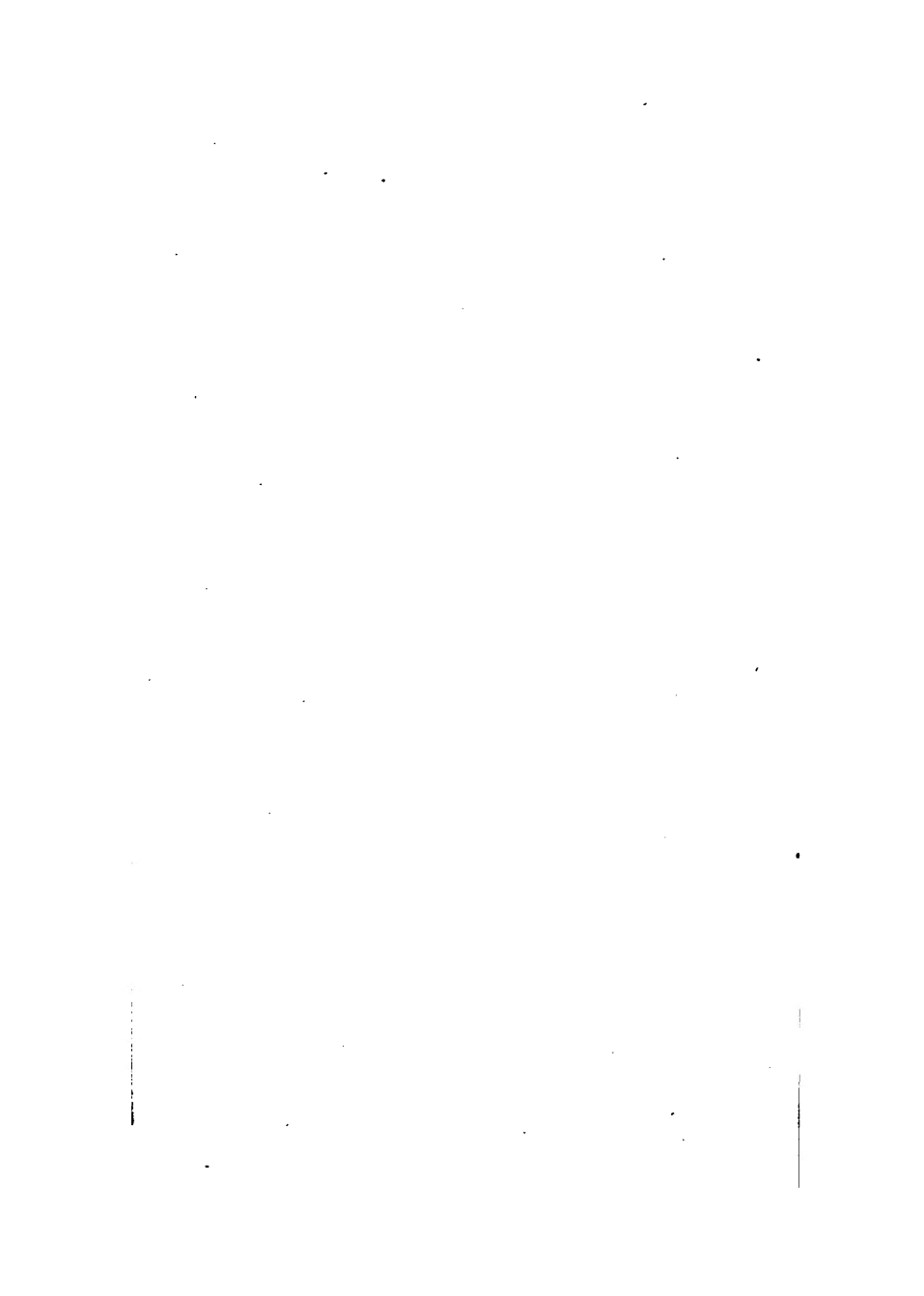
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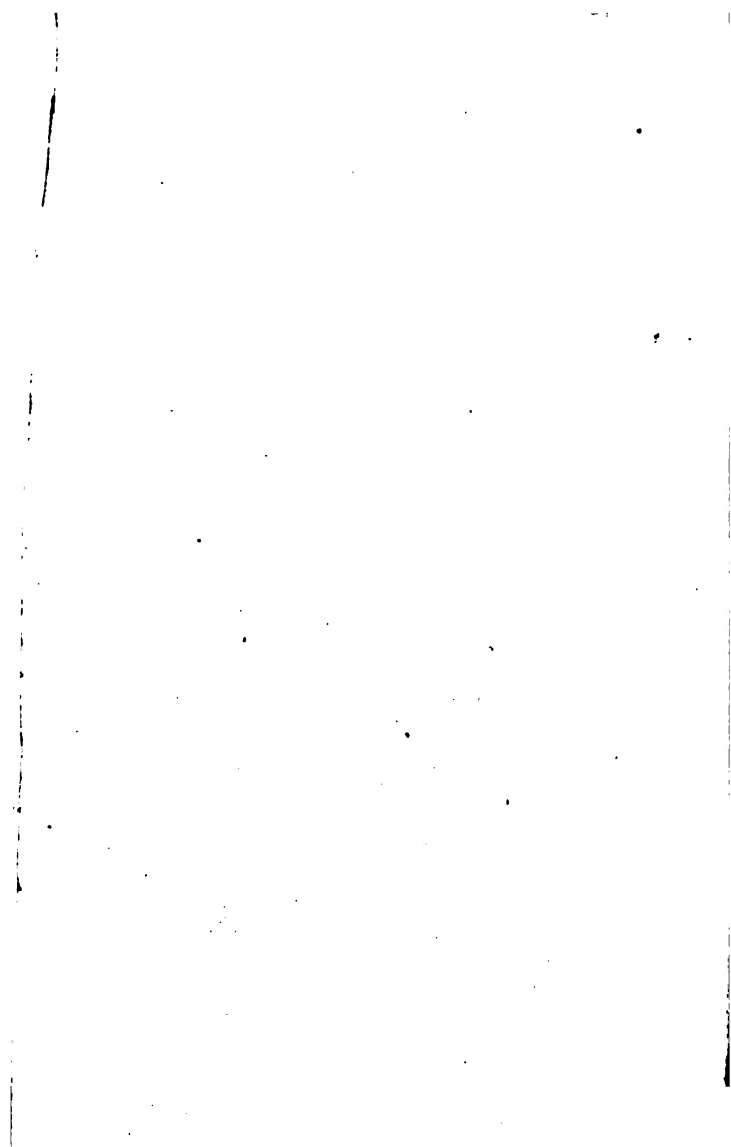


ARTES SCIENTIA VERITAS











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THE

THREE HUNTERS.

By JAMES L. BOWEN.

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THE THREE HUNTERS.

CHAPTER I.

WHITHER, AH, WHITHER?

9-24-54 MFP
THE scene opens upon a delightful evening in early spring, near the close of the last century. The genial sun was sinking behind the western hills. Those slanting sunbeams fell upon many a happy home and cheerful group, as they declined toward the mountain-shadowed horizon. No group, however, was there upon that delightful day, which was happier than that one to which we would call attention.

Seated beside the doorway of a snug New-England village house were two persons, a man and wife; while between them, and chatting merrily as he ran from one to the other, was a bright boy of some three years.

Mark Winters, the husband and father, was a young merchant, well to do, though not in circumstances of affluence. Four years of married life had he seen, and they had been seasons of unalloyed happiness. By industry and devotion to business, coupled with an unimpeachable moral character, he had won the good opinions of all with whom he came in contact. Although young, and dependent upon his own exertions, Mark had been a favourite with Jude Hinton, a rich, influential citizen, and when the young man asked the judge for the hand of his daughter—the courted and flattered Agnes—the request was cheerfully granted. The lovers were united, and, under the auspices of his father-in-law's influence, Mark

had thriven even beyond his most sanguine expectations. Not only was this true in business matters, but, as a man and citizen, he daily gained in the consideration of the community.

Upon the present occasion, both the parents were deeply engrossed by the childish enjoyments of little Edward, the laughing, bright-eyed pledge of their love and happiness.

Endowed with all the ardour of early childhood's happy heart, and blessed with health and vigour, the little fellow entered with full zest into the pleasures of the hour. With hearty bursts of infantile laughter he flew from point to point, now intent upon the capture of some buzzing insect, and when that feat was accomplished, or his nimble feet had proven insufficient for the task, he would return to his father's side, and scrambling upon his knee, give way to the delight he felt in hearty, ringing bursts of merriment. After a momentary pause, he would dart away upon some other childish fancy, and return to be caressed by the happy mother in like manner.

For the twentieth time had he left the side of his parents, when an aged woman, who had been closely regarding his gambols from within, appeared at the door. Her brow was somewhat clouded, and there was a look of concern upon her venerable features, quite foreign to their usual benignant cast.

"I can tell you, Miss Winters," she said, almost mournfully, "that something will happen to this boy, so sure as you're alive! I never knew a child carry on in this way that wasn't either sick or met with some accident."

The mother would have laughed at the fears of good

At last Lucy, but she feared to wound her kindly heart, and in careless tones expressed her faith that all would be well with the child.

"I'm half a mind to call him, however," the mother added, rising to her feet.

Even while she hesitated, his clear, ringing laugh came to her ear. Mark drew her gently to his knee.

"Let the little fellow play," he said, quietly; "the clear air and soft spring-time have filled his heart with happiness. Sorrow will come only too soon to the little soul."

"How prophetic were the words!

"Would you believe, Mark, I saw some one to-day—one that you once felt an especial interest in! Guess who, just to let me know how shrewd you may be in that New England practice!"

"Then you must give me some clue from which to guess!"

"Well—it was one of my former flames; one of your rivals in days long ago. Isn't that definite?"

"You know I never was well posted upon the subject of your discarded lovers! So I must decline giving any guess."

"You have not forgotten Sam Brown?" Agnes queried with a look of mischief—"your old favourite?"

"I have some occasion to remember him," Mark returned; "but you must be mistaken. Sam went West about two years ago, as I understood."

"That may be, and yet I saw him to-day, as plainly as I see you here. He passed along the road while I was playing with our child at the door. I recognized him at once, but gave him no sign, nor did he seem to have a suspicion as to who I might be. He was much bronzed

from exposure, and I presume has just returned from the Far West states."

"Unless he is much changed for the better, he will lead an unsettled life," said Mark, reflectively. "His temperament was such that he must have dash and excitement. It maybe that he will form settled habits at some time, but I should fear to trust the happiness of a second party to his keeping."

"Really, Mark, I do not see that your opinion of poor Sam changes with the lapse of time. You always were uncharitable towards him!" Agnes remarked with a slight laugh.

"Yet, no more than justly. He was wild and reckless, with no moral principle, nothing to guide him save impulse and passion. He had money in plenty to serve his purpose, and when his determination was once taken nothing would deter him. Do you know, dearest, I half think he was terribly nonplussed by your refusal of his suit?"

"I think you have remarked that before. I have no doubt it might have rankled a little in his impulsive bosom, yet he has probably forgotten it all long ago."

"Do not flatter yourself that he forgets so readily." Mark suggested, with some emphasis.

"But you do not mean that you are afraid of him?" playfully queried the wife, while a little tantalizing smile played about the corners of her mouth.

"No, I do not fear him," Mark returned. "At the same time, I have no doubt he would do us an injury, were it within his power. But let us dismiss this subject; it is getting late. Call Edward; it is time he were in."

Mrs. Winters skipped merrily away in the direction taken by the truant, while her clear voice called upon his

name. Mark started with surprise, as he heard the voice call again and again, with no response.

It was nearly five minutes before Agnes returned, and a look of fear was upon her features. Mark, not noticing that she was alone, turned to enter the dwelling, but quickly hastened to her side at the sound of her voice.

"Mark," she exclaimed, hastily, "I can find nothing of Edward; I am sure he is not in the yard or garden; I have searched in every nook and corner! Where can he have gone?"

"You must have overlooked him," the father returned, endeavouring to be calm, though deeply startled at the absence of the child. "I will assist you in finding him;" and together they returned to renew the search.

Hither and thither they hastened, calling the name of the missing one, exploring every spot where it was possible he might be hidden, or have wandered.

Every foot of the ground had been traversed and examined, all to no purpose, and again the startled and afflicted parents stood face to face. Each gazed upon the other, each read the pain and anxiety which lent that deadly pallor to the features—the wild beating to the heart.

"Agnes, where *can* the child be?" asked Mark. The trembling mother could only repeat the inquiry.

"Possibly he may have returned to the house, unobserved," suggested Mark, catching at the shadow of a hope. "Let us at least search there."

They returned to the house, and from attic to cellar every corner and apartment was examined. All was in vain; the child was not to be found.

There was now but one course to be pursued, and this was at once adopted. The neighbours were alarmed, and

a general search instituted. No one had seen the body, yet all joined cheerfully in the effort to discover him.

Railroads and telegraphs were among the things which science was yet to produce; and although Mark used every endeavour to obtain intelligence of the inexplicable fate of his son, days, weeks, months rolled on; still the same dreadful suspense.

CHAPTER II.

THE THREE HUNTERS.

IGNORING time and space, the reader will pass over twenty years, and visit, with us, a wild, dark place, far in the then western wilds. The time was evening. The sun had sunk below the horizon, and twilight clothed all objects in its sombre draperies. Even through the old forest came a keen, cutting breeze, which penetrated clothing and flesh alike, sending a sharp chill to the bone, causing even the hardy frontiers-men to shrink from its bitter path, and gather closer to the enlivening fire, or behind some giant trunk, which would shield the shrinking flesh from the blast.

Snugly ensconced around the fading embers of a small camp-fire were seated three men, who, from the great contrast they presented, and the apparent good feeling existing between them, might well be taken as perfect types of the western ranger, fifty or sixty years since.

The first was a short, powerfully-built man, not far from forty-five years of age, roughly and coarsely dressed, with a look of settled care-for-nothing-ness upon his features. At some portion of his life, John Sweet, for such was his name, might have been attractive, personally, but years of reckless life had merged all the more

pleasant lines into a confused mass of passionate, sensuous lineaments. A sandy beard covered the entire lower portion of his features, while the bearskin cap, pulled low down upon his brows, tended to conceal the remainder of his visage. Two sharp, burning eyes, with a strong, thin nose, and prominent cheek-bones, constituted all that was exposed to outward vision. The only portion of his dress which seemed to boast a civilized taste, was a hunting frock, which, worn, torn, and greasy, seemed to have rendered service for an indefinite number of years. The rest of his dress was of skins, presenting no very inviting appearance. His rifle rested upon his knee; horn and bullet-pouch were suspended about his neck, his back was planted against a huge oak; a short, black pipe was in his mouth, sending forth clouds of not very delicately scented smoke.

Standing at a short distance to the right of John Sweet, was a much younger man—a mere youth, indeed—who seemed little fitted for the rough duties of a frontier life. Such would have been the impression at the first glance, and yet a closer scrutiny would have revealed the fact that every limb and muscle was perfect, and endowed with vigour and fire. Like his companions, he wore a bearskin cap, but the dim light of the smouldering fire revealed full and regular features, a clear, calm eye, and graceful contour that might well have given him a passport to the confidence of all. His dress bore more of the marks of refinement than that of either comrade. His hunting-frock was new, and fitted his graceful figure to the best advantage, while the strong breeches of deerskin, with leggings and moccasins of the same material, although well worn, were carefully kept. The usual long “shooting iron” leaned against the nearest tree, while in

his belt appeared the customary complement of pistols, and a long, keen knife.

Dissimilar as were these two, they were bound by the tie of father and son.

The third and last of the group might have been from thirty to thirty-five years of age—a man possessed of reckless courage and uncommon strength. Ben Williams was emphatically an Indian-hunter and Indian-fighter. While but a youth, his parents had been massacred by the savages, and, from that time, his life had been devoted to the one-absorbing passion of “wiping out” the human tigers of the American forest. On the frontier few names were better known than his, or known to be more feared. His reckless daring astonished his friends and nonplussed his foes, who, believing him under the special protection of the Great Spirit, had, upon more than one occasion, spared his life, when even the bold ranger himself had supposed his hour had come. Repeated lessons had, in a measure, taught the reckless man the necessity for caution, yet, when aroused, his fiery nature knew no bounds, and he was then the reckless, fearless giant.

He was seated upon the ground, at a short distance from the embers, his back placed carelessly against a tree, his rifle upon the ground beside him, while, from a large, wooden pipe of his own construction, he rolled forth large volumes of smoke. The flickering light of the fire threw him into clearer relief than either of his companions, and yet there was less in his countenance to repay a continued scrutiny than in either of the others. His features were regular, stern, and massive, betraying nothing of what might be passing within. His eyes were keen and piercing, yet that was all. They met the gaze of friend or foe alike, never quailing, never changing. A massive,

matted beard, concealing the lower portion of his face, added a look of ferocious daring to naturally stern features.

"Blast my skin, men," at length broke forth Ben, as the smoke of his pipe died away, and he drew nearer to the fire, "but I jist am gittin' tired o' this. Four days is too long for a thousand men to be cooped up in a fort, with yellin' heathen all 'round 'em. Tell ye what, men, if half the boys in thar' had the grit of old Ben, they'd come out o' that, and drive the redskins off, when they fust showed their nasty heads. They wouldn't 'av' waited for Clay with as many more to get here before they made a move."

"Slow and sure, that's their motto, and one what John Sweet has jist got well tired of," broke in that personage, in a sort of subdued growl. "For my part, I'm gittin' sick o' this everlastin' scoutin', while them as come to fight, and gits all the praise on't, stay in the fort, like women and children, leavin' a few of us to keep watch, and see that nobody comes to disturb 'em."

"Can't say but I likes the bisness well enough," went on Ben, warming with the subject; "but jist tell us what ye think o' sich orders as we had this arternoon? Not tew shoot on any considerations, oh no! for Clay was goin' to make a 'dive early in the mornin' and would sweep everythin' before him! Now," he added, with a sweep of his brawny fists, "jist you bet if Ben Williams runs aroud o' an Injin there'll be a right smart chance for a collusion, an' if Ben thinks best ter shoot, why shoot he does. That's plain as gospel."

"A dig for your gospel," growled Sweet. "I can understand it all, and tell you it's all a big humbug; though I suppose Charley here thinks differently since

that gal over the way give him a Bible, and hoped 'he would read and practice it for her sake."

He cast a glance at his son, as he spoke. Charles appeared somewhat confused by this direct appeal. He stammered for a moment, but rejoined, in a manly tone:—

"Martha Billings, to be sure, gave me a Testament, and wished me to read it, which I have done, when I had an opportunity, and shall continue to do, unless some circumstance should deprive me of it."

"Bravo, boy, bravo," sneered the father. "And I suppose you can explain, and lay down the creed to us, in the absence of a parson, and take the time when you should be looking out for yer scalp or cleanin' yer gun, in readin', and dreamin' about the one what gave it ter ye!"

"I suppose I have shown myself inclined to neglect my duty," the youth returned, with a tone of bitterness, fastening his earnest gaze upon his father.

"Not as I knows on," the other doggedly replied, "nor would it be best for yer to, while yer in this hyar company, I don't think."

"Never fear the boy," interposed the big ranger. "I've see'd men in my day, but never seen one I would rayther trust than this same boy o' yourn. I tell you, he is a boy as what isn't cum across every day, an' ye can well be proud of him. As fur the gal, I wouldn't mind if she'd give me a book, too, and I think I'd carry it a while, for, blame me, if ever I seen purtyer eyes nor hern. But sich things are not for Ben—no, sir! I can find satisfaction enough in shootin' these haythen; only I rayther wonder how the gal and her folks can enjoy themselves out there in the midst of the red-faced and red-coated inemies of their country."

"I don't know nothin' as ter that," responded Sweet,

"only I suppose they are on good terms enough with the enemy. Leastwise, I wouldn't care to trust my scalp to their mercy again."

"Now just look a here, cumrad'," broke in Ben, quite sternly, "you know they are true blue, just as well as you nor me. And as to feelin' bad because the boy has took a shine to the bright eyes of the gal, why, I tell you, he is a boy, and will soon be over it, if you don't stir his feelin's up too much."

The parent turned away, evidently somewhat dissatisfied with the reasoning of a man with whom he dared not quarrel, muttering to himself something about being capable of managing his own affairs; while Charles felt from that moment that he had a surer friend in the person of the rough ranger than he had heretofore suspected.

CHAPTER III.

A DISTURBANCE.

It is unnecessary to repeat the disasters which befell the American arms upon the opening of the war of 1812. Not the least of these was the surprise and massacre at Frenchtown, in January of 1813. It was the old story of surrender upon the part of the over-forward Americans, followed by an indiscriminate butchery by the Indians, and the cool, quiet acquiescence of their English allies.

Along the frontiers the news flew like light. The hardy frontiers-man, indignant at the treachery and duplicity of the foe, flew at once to arms, and demanded to be led against the treacherous English and their savage allies. Harrison had erected, on the Maumee river, a strong fort called Fort Meigs, toward which, the

volunteers hastened as a sort of rendezvous. About the 1st of May, this fort was besieged by a large body of Indians, with detachments of troops and engineers from the British forces, and it was as auxiliaries and scouts for those within the fort, that the three rangers of whom we write, as well as others of their class, were engaged. From the character of the service they were to perform, and the dangers of their situation, it will be seen that men of no ordinary tact and daring were required.

"Blow me, cumrad'," at length broke in Williams, with his usual off-hand manner, "but I think it's time we were under our blankets. What say you, youngster?" turning to Charles; "it's your night ter stan' guard, I believe, and if ye have no objections, I think I may as well turn in, for ye see we may have to move at any time."

Charles expressed himself quite prepared to be left alone, and big Ben was speedily stretched beside the root of a forest monarch. With a parting injunction to the guard to be cautious, he was almost immediately asleep.

John Sweet followed the example of his fellow-ranger, and, taking the opposite side of the embers, was soon asleep, leaving the youth alone with himself and the darkness.

For some time the sentinel remained upon his post, his mind filled with the lonely surroundings of his position. Upon the right lay a force of friends, within the defences of a strong fort; in front of, and around them, lay a host of savage enemies, with their more civilized, but not to be trusted, allies, whose scouts and spies might even then be within striking distance of himself or his sleeping friends. Over all, the canopy of darkness

was drawn so closely that scarcely at a yard's distance could a person be discerned.

Again and again did the young sentinel pause, and, bending close to the earth, suppress even his breath, fancying footsteps were gliding stealthily through the forest; but long and careful listening failed to reveal anything save the murmur of the breeze and the swaying of branches, which even a much older head might well have imagined the result of stealthy movements on the part of an unseen foe. But, reason as he would, Charles could not divest his mind of the impression that some foe was lurking near. Cautiously he changed his position, and listened with suppressed breathing for any development, but no result followed. Oh, for light, even were it the broad glare of noonday, to relieve the fearful uncertainties of that chaotic blackness.

Once, indeed, did the lonely watcher steal to the side of the slumbering Ben, half determined to awake him; but just as his hand was stretched forth to carry his purpose into execution, he started back, and with an inward reproof for his timidity, removed cautiously away.

Another hour passed, and Charles had more than half determined that he was a coward after all. Everything was quiet; scarcely a sound was to be heard. The stillness was in the highest degree oppressive. But suddenly he started. Surely that sound was produced by nothing short of a human step! He listened intently; then changed his position, and listened again. It could not be that he was mistaken, for he had heard the movement quite plainly. He resolved to arouse Ben, as he trusted deeply in the instinct and prowess of that daring son of the forest. Exercising a considerable degree of skill to reach the side of the herculean hunter unobserved, he

succeeded, and, bending over to arouse him, Charles was confounded at placing his hand upon bare earth. Ben was gone!

For a single moment young Sweet stood trembling at this discovery; then a feeling of hope and confidence took the place of his former suspicions. The footstep he heard was that of the hunter, who, having been aroused in some manner, probably had determined to satisfy himself that all was right. Pleased with this inference, the young man for a moment forgot his former caution, and the single careless movement into which he was betrayed very nearly cost him his life. Wary and keen-sighted foes were near, and had for a long time kept close espionage upon every movement of the sleeping party. Only for the intense darkness, an attack would have been made an hour before; but, until that moment, no savage had been able to fix the whereabouts of a single individual. The momentary inadvertence of the sentinel had shown the lurking foe very nearly where to strike, and the flash of three or four rifles, and the yells of half-a-dozen savage throats, gave the first intimation of their real proximity. Although surprised at this unexpected attack, Charles was unharmed, and, with a true ranger's instinct, he threw himself behind a large tree which stood between himself and the savages. In another moment the Indians rushed past him, and by the sound he became satisfied that they were searching for his body, never having a doubt but that he had fallen at their fire.

Of the whereabouts of Ben and his own father the youth could only conjecture. Feeling quite sure they were safe, he moved cautiously around the trunk of the tree, bringing it as much as possible between himself and the scattered band who were exploring the ground, in

hopes of discovering a body from which to wrest a scalp as their bloody trophy. Scarcely had he changed his position when the sharp crack of a rifle rung out, eliciting a terrible howl of pain from some sufferer, followed by a burst from the stentorian lungs of Ben—

"Killed another white man, did ye, ye infernal imps?" he shouted; "killed the boy have ye, ye British heathens? Well, I reckon ye hain't got through with Ben Williams just yet," and the flash and report of a pistol followed. The flash of the weapon revealed to Charles the position of a savage close at hand, and almost simultaneously with the report, he brought his rifle to bear upon the dusky figure, and fired. The falling of a heavy form to the earth showed the effect of the shot. Almost before the echo had subsided, a third shot, which could have come from no one except the elder Sweet, woke the response of the forest, and added to the growing uneasiness of the savages. The Indians seemed originally to have been eight in number. Of these four had discharged their pieces at the onset, and, of the four who had reserved their fire, one already had fallen. One other raised his weapon in the direction of Ben and pulled the trigger, but the miserable weapon only flashed, revealing his position to the keen eyes of his enemies. The next moment the pistol of Charles cracked within a yard of his brain, and he fell to rise no more. The superstitious Indians were taken by surprise. Four of their number had fallen, while they seem to be encompassed with hidden foes, whom they could in no manner discover, yet whose deadly aim was momentarily making sad havoc among themselves. With a yell of disappointment, they fled, leaving their fallen braves to the tender mercies of the enemy.

Ben had succeeded in reloading his rifle, and, as the steps receded in the distance, it gave a parting salute, though evidently without effect, as the fleeing savages only quickened their pace at the report, and in a few moments their pattering steps died away in the distance.

Waiting to assure themselves that all was right, the three rangers approached, and were relieved to find that not a scratch had been inflicted upon any of the party.

Some premonition of danger seemed to have warned the elder rangers, and each awoke almost at the same instant. Listening intently, they had heard the incautious step that had startled Charles, and had taken to cover at the opportune moment. Fearing the firing had attracted attention, it was determined to move to some more secure spot, which was at once done. At the distance of half-a-mile they paused, and, as the darkness had now given place to starlight, which relieved the terrible blackness, they had no difficulty in selecting a comfortable nook. Ben insisted upon standing guard, and the father and son threw themselves upon the ground to rest.

CHAPTER IV.

MAY 5, 1813.

"COME, come," growled Ben, giving each of his sleeping companions a nudge, "the sun 'ill be up soon, an' if ye want to be around at the dance 'tis time ye war movin'."

The first faint flushes of coming dawn could be discerned through the opening of the forest, though as yet the beams had not penetrated the massive depths of the wood. The sleepers sprang to their feet at the first sound of the gruff

voice, and, together, the trio proceeded to a small brook near at hand, where their toilet, more vigorous than elegant, was speedily performed. The supply of bread and meat in their wallets furnished a substantial breakfast. Thus prepared, and seeing that their weapons were in order, the party moved cautiously and swiftly through the forest, in a manner to bring them in the rear of the besiegers. For half an hour they marched silently and rapidly. No one spoke, none paused, but pressed forward as if on a mission of life and death.

At length Ben, who was in advance, slackened his pace, and finally paused. Removing the ramrod from his gun, and tapping upon the trunk of a tree, he awaited a response. It came in a moment--the rapped tapping of a woodpecker, close at hand.

"Here they are, then," remarked Ben, with satisfaction; "just wait till I goes ahead, an' see all's right;" saying which he pushed forward, leaving his comrades to await his return. In five minutes he reappeared.

"All right, boys," he remarked, "here's ole Dave Sayles, an' a harf dozen other as good fighters as ever chewed a red-skin. Come, they're waitin' fer us, an' we don't need ter stay here!"

He led the way; and in a few moments the two groups had met. A more characteristic assemblage than that presented might not be met with in a lifetime. Grouped beneath a massive oak, were nearly half a score of scouts and borderers, the bravest and boldest of their race. Some were smoking, a few held half-devoured bits of meat in their fingers, others leaned idly upon their guns, but every eye turned with looks of curiosity and keen scrutiny upon the new comers. Many of the characters were known to John Sweet, and a few to Charles, but the

majority gazed upon the youth with a species of contempt, which was keenly felt by the object, but which he could not avoid. Ben Williams noticed this, and resolved to correct the general feeling.

"Strangers," he began, his gruff voice fixing the attention of every person present, "this hyar young chap what yer see, hain't seen so many years as most on us; but when it comes ter fightin' an scoutin', ye may jist bet he's a hoss! Why, strangers, last night, jist in ther darkist time, the reds pitched inter us, an' blame me if this hyar chap didn't wipe out two, an' ole Ben only punched over one. Blow me, though, if he didn't."

Ben paused, for the speech he had delivered had entirely exhausted his powers of oratory. It was not without its effect. Half-a-dozen hands were stretched forth to grasp that of the boy-ranger, and from being an object of suspicion, he found himself at once transformed into a general favourite.

"Wal, youngster," remarked the leader of the party, a tall, raw-boned Kentuckian, whose only pride and delight was in danger and strife, "I'm glad yer o' the true grit, for, less I'm mighty mistaken, ye'll find chances afore night ter prove yer spunk. But, when Ben Williams tells me a man's ter be trusted, d'ye see, I know I can trust that thar' man."

"I am young, at least in years," was the modest reply, "but, from boyhood, I have been a companion of my father in his scouting and hunting excursions."

"So yer a chick of his, are ye?" the Kentuckian asked, his eye resting upon John Sweet. "Wal, I s knowed yer dad this dozen years, but never knowed as he had a boy o' his own afore."

"But yer see I has; an' a boy, I'm not ashamed ter

"call mine," broke in the father. "I's learnt him all I knows in the way o' wood-craft, and I'll jist set him aside to any red-skin what tramps these yer woods, so I will."

At this moment the first beams of the sun fell upon the party, and, almost simultaneously, rapid and steady bursts of musketry and rifles from the direction of the fort told that the struggle was begun. The yells and cheers of the combatants could be plainly heard, borne upon the still morning air. Instinctively every man grasped his weapon, and looked toward Dave Sayles for direction.

"Wal, boys," that worthy remarked, opening the pan of his rifle and assuring himself that it was in order, "the work has agun, an' if we want ter hev' a hand in it we must be a-movin'. But, instead o' lookin' ter me, ye'll take yer orders from Ben Williams in futur'; fer ye may be sure he's ther man kin tell ye's jist what wants doin'!"

"Not by a long shot!" exclaimed Ben. "I's one what's here ter *fight*, an' not ter lead others. Ser long as we all keeps tergether, Dave Sayles is boss, but, when we hev' ter scatter, why, I think we kin all take keer o' ourselves."

With a low laugh and a few jesting remarks, the brave band set forth; but there was little occasion for their services. Before they reached their intended position, the forces of the British and Indians, driven from their works, were in full retreat toward the depths of the wilderness. Hanging upon their flanks, the brave scouts kept up a scattering and annoying fire, which led to a continual skirmish, and assisted most materially in the discomfiture of the routed forces. Finding at length that the Americans, instead of following up their victory,

had recklessly dispersed into the forests, and were busied in collecting trophies or wandering idly about, the scouts ceased their desultory pursuit, and returned toward the lines of the scattered, heedless victors.

The inexcusable conduct of the Americans in this instance was not long in being visited with the retribution it seemed to crave. The defeated British, finding themselves unpursued, paused in their flight, rallied their savage allies, and returned to the charge with desperate valour. The amazed Kentuckians, finding themselves overpowered, their way to the fort cut off, and no resource left but flight, took their headlong way toward the nearest settlement. A few reached the fort and gained its friendly shelter, while many were killed at once or taken captives. The faithful and devoted band of scouts maintained their positions with firmness, their unerring rifles dealing death from the shelter of every rock, tree, or ravine. Never did gallant men fight more stubbornly than this band of rangers, until the dispersion of the Americans left them alone with more than a hundred times their own number. Finding themselves almost entirely surrounded, they scattered, every man seeking his own safety.

Charles and Ben were thrown together by some chance, and by artifice and agility succeeded in eluding and baffling their pursuers—reaching a place of safety in a short time.

“Yonder is the tree where we were to rendezvous in case of separation, I think,” remarked Charles, pointing towards a tall pine which reared its summit far above its neighbours; “shall we proceed there at once?”

“No matter, my boy,” the stout hunter replied, “not in the least; I don’t think any o’ the cantankerous scamps

"I find us here, and here we may as well rest for a minute or two. Thyar's none o' the boys but can take keer o' themselves; leastwise, if there isn't, we can't help 'em any. But, hark!" he suddenly exclaimed, pausing and bending forward. "To cover! lively!"

A footstep was approaching, and although the heavy plunging falls indicated some refugee unaccustomed to forest warfare, it was not improbable that bloodthirsty foes were at his back. In a very few moments he appeared, bearing down at full speed, his new uniform torn and gaping, minus rifle, hat, and shoes, while the expression of his features plainly showed that his "demoralization" was complete.

"Halt, there! stop, you rascal!" exclaimed Ben, stepping into full view and presenting his rifle; "what's the matter, and where are ye a-going, in that big hurry."

"Me, oh, massy, don't stop me!" bawled the fugitive, endeavouring to pass on; "there's more'n a thousin' Injuns right clost behind me; I shall be killed—I shall."

"No yew won't, neither," bawled the gentle Ben, seizing him by the coat and checking his further progress. "Wait till yer git over bein' scart, and then tell us what's the matter!"

"Oh, murder, I shall be murdered!" fairly yelled the frightened man; "and if yer want to save yer own skelp, ye'd better cum along, too."

"I'm much obleeged tew ye," sneered the hardy scout, "but I reckon Ben Williams isn't in the habit o' runnin' till there's suthin' to run fer—not te-day ner te-morrey."

The sound of a second footstep caused the rangers to again seek the shelter of friendly trees, but any suspicions they might have entertained were speedily dissipated by the appearance of John Sweet, who came rapidly toward

them, a rifle grasped in either hand, and a look of satisfaction mantling his features.

"Old boss! I'm glad ter see ye safe!" was the greeting of Ben, as he approached within hailing distance.

John paused and looked around in doubt.

"May I never shoot another red!" he muttered, "if that wasn't Ben's voice; but where is the feller?"

"Not far off, I take it," that worthy continued stepping into sight; "but I tell yer, John, I'm glad ter see yer all safe and sound! Reckin ye've made a raise o' a shootin' stick, too, somewhere."

"Reckon! Blame me if a coward right ahead o' me looked back and seen me comin' throwed his gun, an made tracks jist the swiftest. I picked his gun up, for I thought might be I'd overtake the fool; but he is across the Missysippy afore this, I reckon!"

"Guess the man's here," remarked Ben, in his blunt way, and turning to the fugitive he sung out:—

"Hilloa, here, stranger! come an' see if this is your gun. Move quick!" he added, as the fellow came slowly and reluctantly toward them.

"I—I guess it is mine," he stammered; "leastways it looks jist like mine, an' I dropt it somewhere."

"Well, a pretty soldier you, to drop your gun," said Sweet; "how came it that you lost it?"

"Yer see, the fac' was, the Injins war' so clus to my heels 'at I had to drop my gun tew keep out o' their infernal hands. I thort I might better lose my gun than get scalpt myself."

"Yea, that's sound doctrine," returned John; "but how did it happen that ye lost hat an' shoes? Seems the Injins must ha' had ye in their claws, eh, stranger?"

With considerable hesitation and stammering, the an-

fortunate infantry-man explained the loss of his hat by the unwelcome offices of a thorn-bush, his shoes by the tenacity of a bog; while, at the same time, the Indians in pursuit would allow him no moment to repair losses. Sweet burst into a low, chuckling laugh :—

“ ‘Wai, stranger,” he remarked, handing him the weapon, “ take yer gun, an’ next time, afore ye run a mile an’ a half, be sure ‘tis an Injin what’s behind yer, for I was clas’ to yer as much as a mile arter ye threw yer gun, an’ I knows there’s no Injins around then. But ye war’ skeer’d, so I advise ye to seek safe quarters somewhere, because ye’ll never do for a soldier—no ye won’t,” and he turned from the partially reassured man, who, quaking at every joint with fear, took his way toward the settlement; having a hope that, by some friendly chance, he might succeed in working his way to safety.

The group of veteran hunters regarded him till he disappeared in the forest, and then they moved slowly in the direction of the appointed rendezvous.

“ A mighty hard day’s work we’ve had of it, and nary a thank to show,” remarked Sweet the elder, as he followed his son’s lead.

“ ‘The day has had a disastrous result, father,” the young man returned, “ and yet I do not feel that we have lost all. The besiegers know that nothing but the carelessness of our own men saved them from total defeat; and they must know, if the attempt is made again, they will be whipped at all hazards.”

“ ‘Yis, yis, boy,” the father responded, “ but they know well enough that we won’t make any more efforts at present; and when they are made, Tecumseh and Proctor won’t be surprised as they were this mornin’.” No,

Charles, I'm afraid we'll come out no better than Hull did at Detroit.

"Thank Heaven, the commander of Fort Meigs is not a coward!" the youth returned, warmly.

"Thank Heaven, or thank Congress, it's all the same, I suppose, in the long run, though I have no doubt General Hull had good reasons for surrendering."

"Then the people of the United States would like to know them," the youth replied, warmly.

By this time the party had drawn so near the rendezvous that it was necessary to proceed with extreme caution. In a short time they reached the place. To their surprise, none of the others had arrived.

"We'll wait a bit," remarked Ben, "an' if they don't appear, why we'll know they've had a warm time, an' maybe can't get here jis' when they'd prefer."

CHAPTER V.

THE FOREST HOME.

THE scene and locality to which we would now invite the attention of the reader is several miles distant from Fort Meigs, upon the banks of a small, pleasant stream, a tributary of the Maumee. It was a delightful, open dell, where luxuriant verdure intermingled with flowers—an oasis in that dreary forest. In this secluded spot was to be seen the snug log cabin of a pioneer.

There was something in the general appearance of the cabin to arrest attention. In front, a small yard had been enclosed. Here were to be seen groups of native and cultivated flowers, arranged with taste and an eye to beauty. A grass-bordered path ran up to the doorway.

Upon one side of the path, and secured to the fence

surrounding the flower-garden, were two horses, saddled and bridled; the one, from his superior trappings and equipments, being evidently the favourite steed of some officer in the British service, while the inferior animal belonged to some servant. This supposition received additional probability from the fact that a rough-looking son of Erin was rolling lazily in the soft grass at a little distance, sucking vigorously at a strong black pipe. Leaving him to the enjoyment of his dirty old pipe, let us direct our attention to the cabin.

The room was scrupulously neat and singularly pleasant. As the afternoon was somewhat chill, a lively fire roared in the capacious chimney, casting a cheerful influence throughout the room. The inmates were four in number. First in order sat a tall man, somewhat advanced in life, whose hair and beard, once a dark auburn, were now grey, as if whitened by the frosts of threescore years. And yet, this could scarcely be the person's age, since he evidently was not more than forty or forty-five years of age. His form was vigorous, his eye steady and bright, and the whole mien that of a man in full manhood's vigour.

Mark Winters, our old friend, the proud father, and agonized parent—for it was none other—had seen much of suffering, much to implant the tell-tale lines of silver more and more closely in that waving hair and flowing beard. For a long time had he struggled, hoping against hope, that some tidings of the missing son would reach him, and relieve the fearful suspense which, day by day, was gnawing deeper and deeper into the heart of each agonized parent. Vain hope! No ray of light dawned upon the darkened pathway; no silver lining had that cloud which settled like a heavy pall upon them.

Health at length gave way under the long-continued tax, and, as a remedy, the kind old physician advised travel, and a change of air and scenery. Appointing an agent in whom he had the utmost confidence to follow up and investigate any and every trace which might, by any chance, be discovered, the father bade adieu to his home, and, in company with his sorrowing wife, they had roamed for several years over the wide earth, meeting, indeed, a restoration to health, but no tidings from the lost one.

During his wanderings, Mark had passed through a portion of the West, where the solemn character of the scenery seemed to strike favourably upon his lonely mind. The result was that he soon returned to New England, to bid it, as he supposed, an eternal farewell, and settled in his present secluded, romantic residence.

Mrs. Winters, the fond wife and grief-stricken mother, was there also—her once light and joyous heart oppressed with a settled sorrow, which time or change could not alleviate.

Seated between the husband and wife was a young maiden of some twenty summers, a bright-eyed, laughing, hearty little body as one could wish to see, whose roguish smile was enough to chase away half the sorrows of a lifetime. Martha Billings was a ward of Mark Winters. A chum and companion of his having died, leaving no one to care after his motherless daughter, then ten years of age, he had requested, as a parting favour, that his friend Mark would adopt her as his own, and care for her till such time as she should be able to combat the cold world for herself. Mark had gladly obliged his friend, and Martha became their adopted daughter, soon to be loved as tenderly as their own, and to love in return.

The fourth person present was a little fellow, clad in the glittering scarlet of the British army. A small man, with light flaxen hair and restless, uneasy, grey eyes, he was not a person to command respect. Yet, in his own eyes, Major Earling, or as he usually spoke of himself, "Earling," was a man of no ordinary importance. Whatever his rank and person might appear to others, it was quite evident it was all in all to himself. If the dapper little major had a redeeming trait, it was that he possessed a fair share of personal courage, a fact which was well attested by his venturing thus far from camp with but a single attendant. Several miles intervened between the cabin and the British head-quarters, nearly every foot of which was traversed by the deadly scouts of the American army.

That he seemed to feel an unusual degree of interest in the family of Mark Winters was evident, from the fact that, since he had discovered the cabin, he had visited it every day, though usually with no pretext except the shallow one of inquiring after their family welfare. Appearances seemed to indicate, at this time, however, that he had some errand; and it was not long in being made known, the delivery being accompanied with many patronizing smiles and condescending remarks.

"I've been thinking, my dear Mr. Winters," he began, drawing a pace nearer the host, and laying his index finger upon the back of his left hand, by way of emphasis, "I've thought upon the matter considerable of late, and I think that the very best thing that you can do will be to put yourself directly under the protection of our army. Your situation 'ere 'is not safe, and 'is every 'our growing less so."

"I hardly feel myself in more danger now than for-

merly," replied the other. "The truth is, my friend, as I presume I may call you, I have lived here for many years, disturbing no one, nor has any one disturbed me. If an Indian came to my cabin, cold or hungry, he has been well treated, sent on his way, when his wants were supplied, rejoicing; and the same of the whites who have frequented this section. I am the wayfarer's friend."

"All very good, my friend, all good—in those times. But, you know, it is different now; we are at war; the Indians 'ave now a chance to have vengeance their wrongs, and you see it would not be strange if they were not to make a very close discrimination between friends and foes."

"I should say not, judging by the massacres of last winter, which your own officers, by their presence and indifference, were accessory to," witheringly remarked Mark Winters, turning a full gaze upon his interlocutor.

Earling was somewhat taken aback by this unexpected home-thrust, and, for a moment, twisted his fingers nervously, ere he could rally his "demoralized" train of thought. He soon recovered, however, and, clenching his fist by way of emphasis, expostulated thus:—

"I tell you, my friend, it was as utterly impossible for our officers to stay the savages, as it would be for a single man to try to stem a tornado. We could only stay them by force, and that, as you see, would but entail a greater sacrifice, at the best."

Considering this point perfectly clear, he went on as before:—

"But, as I was saying: thus far I 'ave been able, chiefly by my own efforts, to restrain the savages, and your cabin 'as been unharmed. At any time, and I fear at best very soon, we may be unable to restrain them, or some scouting party may make a diversion this

way, and you will *hall* be murdered, your cabin burned, *hand* thus *hat* one fell blow *hall* will be swept *haway*."

"And I will tell you, just as candidly, that I feel sure within a few days your entire force will be driven from the soil, defeated and discomfited. You know the character of the American people ; that they will not lie dormant and see their soil invaded, and I will warn you that they are not to be trifled with."

"Yes, sir," returned the major, with dignity, "AI think AI understand the *hAmericans* very well ; but their success thus far *hin* this war 'as not been such *has* to give very brilliant prospects for the future. Still, in case we *hare* driven into Canada, you know the *hIndians* will lay everything waste *has* they move, *hand* unless you *hare* *hander* *hour* protection *hit* will be *ha* miracle *hif* you *hare* spared. Not that AI have anything to gain," he broke out, with fresh energy, as if disdaining the remotest allusion to such a thought, "not in the least ! AI 'ope you will never suspect AI can feel any other than the common interests of 'umanity," and he glanced at Martha in a very peculiar manner, "though it always gives *hus* *hofficers* the deepest pleasure if in *hany* manner we can serve the fair ones."

A shade of deeper colour rushed into the face of the maiden. She maintained silence, however, and turned her gaze from the window, while a slight curl of scorn she could not repress wreathed the corners of her rosy mouth.

"I am certainly obliged to you for your humane intentions," Winters replied ; "yet, since we are thus situated, I do not see that I am really at liberty to accept your friendly offer. I am on ground not yet occupied by your forces, which you must be aware is covered by our

own scouts and patrols far more than by yours. Since I believe my own people fully competent to protect me, in case I should need protection, I must decline the honour you would urge upon me."

"No, no," returned the officer, warmly, "you mistake. *hI* would not 'ave you suppose *hI* urged this upon you—far from it. *hI* only mentioned *hit* for your *hown* benefit. *hI* can 'ave no motive myself, *hexcept* *has* *hI* said before, the common one *hof* 'umanity, though you may be assured *hI* should scarcely ride three miles through *ha* country swarming with *henemies*, did *hI* not feel *han* *hunusual* degree *hof* *hinterest* *hin* your welfare. But *hI* think, *hafter* *hall*, the ladies should 'ave *ha* voice *hin* the matter, since the greatest danger will be theirs."

"Let them speak for themselves," was the indifferent reply.

"As for me," Mrs. Winters remarked, "I see no occasion for fear at present, and consider myself far safer here than in your camp, or under your protection."

Martha was silent.

"*hAnd* you, my young lady, *hif* *hI* may ask," the officer at length suggested; "*hare* you quite *hindifferent* to your fate. *halso*?"

"I beg you will have no trouble upon my account!" was the somewhat caustic reply; and the subject was dropped.

That Earling was disappointed was quite evident, yet he was too thoroughly schooled to allow his chagrin to be made manifest. Remarking upon the lateness of the hour, his numerous duties, and the loneliness of the way, he soon sauntered forth, after bidding all a good-bye, with many expressions of regret.

Pat O'Clacy, hearing the clanking of his master's sword,

rose lazily to his feet, rubbed his eyes, put up his pipe, and, tumbling to his seat, the two were soon trotting rapidly away toward the distant British lines.

"That man is a mystery to me," remarked Winters, as he watched his receding form from the doorway. "I cannot understand the interest he seems to feel in our welfare."

"I am sure, father," remarked Martha, "there is something in his appearance I really dislike. Not that he has used ought save the most respectful language, and in all apparent sincerity; still, there is a glance about his eyes I cannot bear. Just as though some hidden purpose was working there."

Mark pondered.

"All may be right," he remarked, after a time, "still it cannot be that any man would take the peril of riding through this forest every day unless there were some powerful motive to influence him. It seems a wonder to me that he has not fallen in with roving bands of scouts before this—unless, indeed, he is really in some league with us."

"Do not believe that," earnestly exclaimed Martha; "he is too fully Briton, heart and soul, for that."

"At least we must be cautious. I shall endeavour to keep a sharp look-out, and, should we suspect his motives, it would be quite easy to have him securely taken care of."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAJOR IN A MINOR MOOD.

THE day following the visit of the major to the house of Mark Winters was the day of battle already spoken of.

Early in the morning the inmates were startled by hearing distant heavy volleys of musketry, which, for some time, continued to increase in volume, evidently drawing nearer and nearer on some portions of the lines, but receding on others. At length the firing seemed almost to cease. Ere long straggling groups of flying savages passed at some distance from the cabin, flitting through the forest like phantoms.

This was the first intelligence which had reached the anxious watchers in regard to the progress of the battle. Their hearts leaped at the thought that their countrymen were victorious, and that the British, with their savage allies, would be driven from the Union's soil.

"Oh, see, father!" the delighted Martha exclaimed, as she caught sight of the fugitive forms, "the Indians are in full flight; surely our men must be victorious!"

"Yes, it is even so," the guardian responded. "God be praised? we shall soon be freed from the presence of these equally hated enemies!"

"We have abundant reason to be thankful," Martha responded; but a look of pain crossed her features as she continued: "we must also remember that a victory is won by the loss of many brave men, and we know not who may have fallen to-day."

"Ah! 'tis but too true. War is a fearful thing, and terrible are its fruits; yet, while Christian communities practice war, we must submit to its awful requirements."

Martha did not speak all she felt. Within she was wondering where the scouts were in such a battle, especially where a youthful-looking ranger—whose name she scarcely knew—would be, and if he were safe after the dreadful combat.

Another feeling soon combined to render the situation of our settlers anything but pleasant.

Was it not more than probable that the irritable savages, exasperated at their defeat, would form the resolve to destroy whatever was American which lay in their path? As Mark reflected he became more than satisfied that nothing save the sudden flight and disorder of the savages had saved him thus far, and, with a sort of anticipation, he strained eyes and ears to detect any sounds of the approaching Americans.

As the reader knows, he was doomed to a bitter disappointment. While still awaiting some sound which should indicate the presence of friends, his ears were greeted with fresh discharges of musketry, and the faint yelling and whooping of combatants was borne to his ears. For a time he listened intently, hoping even against what he could not understand. Fainter and fainter grew the sounds of the conflict, and, in a short time, it ceased altogether.

In vain he racked his brain to discover the reason of this singular result. It seemed incredible that the Americans could have been in turn defeated, and yet, why not?

The shades of evening descended upon a family filled with disquiet. Impressed with the fear that it might be their last night beneath that roof, or indeed, upon earth, how could they be at peace? As the long shadows crept across the little doorway, such simple preparations were

made as might seem of service, and then they gathered about the open door to await the issue of events. The air was still, and over all rested the deep calmness, so holy and silent, yet so solemn, which often follows the day of strife and battle.

"Listen!" suddenly exclaimed Mark, bending forward in an attitude of close attention. "Agnes, am I deceived in those sounds?"

The anxious wife bent from the door, and hearkened. They could proceed from but one cause.

"I fear, Mark," she answered at length, "it can only be the Indians holding their fearful orgies!"

"Heaven be merciful to the unfortunate!" devoutly exclaimed Mark, and, with hearts filled with horror, the family relapsed into silence.

Nearly half-an-hour had thus passed, when they were startled by the stealthy sound of steps approaching from the rear of the cabin. In obedience to the whispered injunction of Mark, the party sought the interior, while he grasped a rifle, determined to defend himself and them, should need be, to the death.

Their fears were quickly appeased, however, by the appearance of the dapper little figure of Major Earling, who came cautiously gliding up the path, looking upon every hand, to assure himself that he was unwatched. Apparently startled by the darkness within the cabin, he paused, and remained for some minutes undecided in what manner to proceed. At length, summoning courage, he sung out in cautious tones:—

"Friend Winters! Are you there?"

For a moment no reply was made, the appearance of the major having roused every spark of patriotic feeling in the heart of Mark Winters. For a time the life or

liberty, at least, of Earling was more in danger than ever before. The principles of strict, if not overstretched justice, at length triumphed, and Mark stepped from the door, just as the impatient officer in scarlet moved forward with a repetition of the question—

"Mr. Winters! *Are you 'ere?*"

"Yes, Sir, *I am here,*" rather crustily responded Mark, "and ready to hear what you may have to say;" but without leading the way toward the cabin, rather blocking the path with his robust frame.

"*I come to see you on business of importance to yourself,*" the slightly nonplussed officer commenced; "*and to talk over matters a little at your leisure;* but, *as it may not be exactly prudent for you to be seen, talking with a British officer,* perhaps we 'ad better take *a seat inside the door?*"

Mark felt deeply disposed to inform the Briton that his threshold could not be crossed by an enemy of his country in arms; but, after a momentary silence, he turned and led the way into the apartment which was unoccupied. Leaving his guest to sit or stand at his convenience, Mark proceeded to the other room, and soon returned with a blazing pine-knot, which he planted in the fireplace, and threw himself upon a seat.

Major Earling had remained standing, his face all abeam with smiles, and his feather-mounted hat in hand, evidently supposing the light would reveal other members of the family, but in this he was doomed to disappointment. Observing the decided movements of his host, he threw himself upon a seat at no great distance, and in his most patronizing manner, opened the conference:—

"Not seeing your family, *I trust they are quite well,*" he proposed.

"Quite well, I assure you," was the cool rejoinder.

"It would seem you must 'ave been within sound of some portion of the battle, 'during the earlier part of the day," was the next remark.

Now it was, indeed, that the anxiety of Mark overstepped all other considerations, and, bending forward, he anxiously inquired the fortunes of the conflict. Earling saw the anxiety displayed, and resolved to profit therefrom.

"I am sorry to inform you," he said, in a hypocritically solemn manner, "that your countrymen were badly defeated and terribly repulsed. Our own loss was quite severe, though nothing to that of the Americans, who were, as an army, totally annihilated! Why, Sir, the country is filled with them far and near, besides their loss upon the battle-field, which was immense."

"The attack, I presume, was made by our men?"

"Yes, Sir; and a mighty strong attack it was, my friend. The Americans came out several thousand strong, and fell upon us in terrible force. The Indians, not used to such rough treatment, ran away, and left us to bear all the attack. To make the story short, we were driven from our works, and should 've suffered severely if the Americans 'ad not scattered into the woods to scalp the killed."

"Scalp the killed!" interrupted Mark, half rising from his seat in surprise and indignation.

"Surely, friend Winters," the major returned, with a very solemn face; "I 'ave 'eard the same thing before, but determined never to believe it until I should see it for myself, with my own eyes, which I did do but a few hours since. Our troops returned to the charge, and

such wholesale destruction *h*I never witnessed. We cut them *h*off from the fort, *h*and the consequence was that their *h*entire force was dispersed. To-morrow we shall occupy their fort, *h*and that brings me to the fact *h*I wish to speak of. You will recollect *h*I spoke with you no longer ago than yesterday *h*upon the subject, *h*and *h*although we did not see the matter in precisely the same light, yet *h*I trust the events of this day will reconcile the slight difference of feeling which then *h*existed."

"If you come to advise me to put myself under your protection, I feel quite sure your mission will be a failure," Mark returned, though his mind was still in a quandary of agitation and suspense. The terrible disaster which Major Earling had pictured with so much apparent truthfulness, had startled him beyond measure. If he felt inclined to doubt the facts, what reason had he for so doing? Did not his own observations tend to confirm the officer's statements?

"*h*I would not be *h*understood as *h*urging you," the major replied, in tones of semi-indifference; "yet there *h*is a thought which *h*occurred to me, *h*and which *h*I would *h*urge you to consider. Since *h*all *h*opposition *h*is *h*at an *h*end, we 'ave much more force than will be *h*actually required to prosecute the campaign. *h*I can *h*order the detail of two soldiers, men of character *h*and 'onour, who can for the present remain 'ere, *h*and, should the natives *h*attempt *h*any *h*outrage, their presence will *h*restrain them. This will be placing yourself *h*under no restraint, *h*and will secure you from danger. Now, what say you, my friend? Time is somewhat precious, *h*and *h*I must make my way back to the camp, in readiness for the *h*operations of the morrow."

Mark knew not in what manner to reply to this proposal. If it were made in good faith, he need have no hesitancy in accepting it, and, were there any evil designs, would he not thus put himself and family completely in the power of the strategist?

"You may not have reflected," he at length said, "that this is not even neutral or disputed ground. It is still our own, and is yet under the surveillance of the patriot scouts, at whose mercy your troopers, and possibly yourself, may be at any moment. You are even now in danger of capture."

"AI feel quite confident," remarked the major, though he glanced uneasily round, "that the scouts have making steps in another direction, and shall feel no compunctions in detailing men to guard your premises, since your friends, if men of honour, would not molest them."

"I know not what answer to make," Mark replied, "since circumstances have become thus changed. Since my countrymen have been defeated, I know not that it would be improper for me to be under the protection of a guard. I appreciate your kindness, however, and, if you choose to send the detail, I will use them as soldiers, and should Ben Williams and Dave Sayles fall in with them, shall represent the case to them as it stands."

"Which AI shall construe into consent," the representative of H. B. M. chuckled, rising and resuming his hat, "You 'ave come to a very wise determination, Mr. Winters, and AI judge you will see the propriety of it, soon. AI will take good care to send the men early on the morrow, and should affairs be favourable, may find time to accompany them, or ride over during the day or evening." Bowing himself out, the well-satisfied official bade his host a "good evening."

Mark Winters returned to the apartment where he had left the women, who, having overheard the proposals and arguments, were busily engaged in considering the same. In the general discussion which followed, many probable chances were spoken of, yet none could prophesy the final result.

"Confound it," remarked Mark, at length—rather a strong word for him—"I more than half wish I had told the major to keep his men at home; but we must make the best of it, and perhaps something will happen soon to bring matters to a crisis."

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

MAJOR EARLING had pursued his way with considerable assurance to the cabin of Mark Winters, believing the defeat of the Americans complete, and that there could possibly be no danger in the visit. His peace of mind would no doubt have been materially shaken had he been aware of the really unpleasant fact that sharp eyes had been upon him, that his steps had been dogged, and nearly every word of his colloquy with Mark overheard by one of the scouts he would most have feared to encounter.

Waiting with his two companions until others of their number had assembled, John Sweet left the group of rangers, and took his way, by an indirect course, toward the cabin of Winters. Not by any means does it follow that the cabin itself was really his destination, although it is possible such might have been the case. He walked silently and rapidly along, till late in the afternoon, keeping a sharp look-out that no foes were upon his track

or in his path, and then he moderated his speed to a very slow walk, at times almost stopping.

Soon a human footstep sounded some distance in the rear, and John speedily sought concealment. The large, partially decayed trunk of a fallen tree afforded a convenient shelter, and, noiselessly raising the hammer of his rifle, the scout awaited the passing of the comer. The heavy, plunging step showed a man unfamiliar with woodcraft, and the firm, confident manner of his approach, showed him no stranger to the ground before him. Not until he had passed the scout's place of hiding did that worthy raise his head; and when the bright scarlet uniform met his gaze, Sweet chuckled with delight.

"So, ho," he mused, "a Britisher, eh? and an officer to boot! Maybe he goes up here for nothin'! Tell you what, Markey Winters, you might better be in Tophet than plotting with the enemy; mark my words! Yonder red-coat has saved his life this time by havin' his face pointed your way, but I don't think any of ye'll make more nor twice, *I* don't."

Uncocking his gun, the fellow moved rapidly on after the little officer. It was a matter of the greatest ease for a man of Sweet's experience to keep the major in view, and yet escape discovery. Reaching the edge of the forest nearest the cabin, Sweet seemed for a moment nonplussed. The officer had disappeared! For a time the scout was at fault, but before he could form any plan for further action, he espied a dusky figure moving around in the shade of the cabin. Listening intently, he soon heard the voices of Mark and the major.

Satisfied that the parties had entered the cabin, the next movement was to reach some place from which he could gather the purport of their conversation. This was

not an easy task, should any one chance to be upon the look-out. It was some thirty yards from the nearest point of the forest to the cabin, and no shelter of any kind broke the surface. Determined not to be baulked by circumstances, the daring scout threw himself upon the ground, and soon brought up just beneath a window of the apartment in which the men were seated. Although somewhat disappointed in finding Mark true to his country, the scout was quite elated at the drift of the conversation, and seemed in far better humour than an hour before. As the officer rose to take his departure, John broke cover, and a few noiseless strides carried him safely to the woody covert.

Earling had no suspicion that anyone was on the watch for him, so often had the journey been made in safety; and now he moved away with all the rapidity his little limbs could muster. Imagine, therefore, his surprise when a burly figure sprang up in his path, and the sharp click of a rifle-lock sounded unpleasantly close to his face. The astonished little man brought himself to a halt, and gazed with surprise and anger upon the unexpected apparition.

"Reckin ye'd better stop thar', stranger!" growled a coarse voice, in tones not to be mistaken. "Seein' thar' ain't any scouts this way, I'll jist trouble ye tew stop and tork to me a little bit."

"Who hare you, hand what do you want hof me?" inquired the determined officer, feeling for a pistol.

"Hold on, there!" again roared the scout, "don't ye dar' to put a hand onto any thin' o' that kind, or I'll blow every brain in yer body more'n sky-high! I don't intend to hurt ye, stranger; nor I'll not detain ye long, but I want to tork a bit with yer, an' as ye can't help yerself, I

guess ye'd better set down on that ar' tree, an' we'll tork matters over ! Come, don't be onreasonable !"

"If you will give me your word that I shall not be 'armed, hand hallowed to proceed upon my way, I am quite willing to do as you suggest."

"Just as yer choose," the scout coolly remarked, keeping his weapon upon the heart of his adversary. "I'll promise all that; but as to the matter of willin' or not, that don't happen to be fer yew to say—not quite !"

Taken as he was at a disadvantage, there was nothing for the major but compliance; so, with a doubtful grace, he took the seat indicated, and awaited the pleasure of his strange interlocutor.

The scout deliberately uncocked his rifle, drew a pistol from his belt, which he pointed at the officer, and then commenced :—

"In the fust place, then, as lawyers say, I want ter know what's yer object in visitin' Mark Winters, seein' as he's a loyal man and ye're an English officer? Come, be candid, now, an' it'll be all the sooner over !"

"My motives toward Mr. Winters, sir, 'ave honly been those of common 'umanity. I knew he was ha kind hand peace-loving man, hexposed to the hassaults of evil-minded hIndians, hand I desired to secure 'inself and family hagainst violence. I surely see nothing in that to hexpose me to such han hindignity has this."

"So, ye wanted ter perfect the family, did ye? Now, why don't yer come out like a man, an' say ye've got an eye on the darter, as well as the old man !"

Earling started. He had not supposed any one could have read his designs thus readily.

"You hastonish me, in ha measure," was the somewhat equivocal answer.

"No doubt o' that," coolly answered the scout. "I'm in the habit o' doin' jist that ar' thing. But let's know what yer think about it? Didn't yer think that ye'd like to take the gal with ye inter Canada?"

"I assure you I 'ave no hentiontion of visiting Canada again till the war is hat han end," was the officer's resolute reply.

"But in case ye should have to go?" queried the scout. "Unless I'm a fool, you're more'n half in love with the purty young creater'. Now, I've a bit o' infirmation to give ye on that very p'int what may be o' sarvice to ye."

"And pray what is that?" The officer grew interested in his interlocutor.

"There's a young fellow, a scout, what stands in your way. Now, as matters stand, if he were quietly taken away, the field would be clear before you. In a few days it will be a matter of life an' death, an' then ye can't effect anything. Now, stranger, we meet as enemies, and arter this transaction's over we must be so still; but if you have tact enough to take this feller off as prisoner o' war, and make sure that he'll not find his way back, the coast will be clear before you."

"Are you really kin earnest?" asked the officer, "or would you but mock me?"

"I'll prove to ye that I'm sincere," emphatically remarked Sweet, "but for the present there are other things to talk about."

"But 'ow ham I to do what you speak of? It is far easier to talk of sending han hactive young fellow off prisoner of war than to get him. Supposing I were disposed to make han effort, 'ow is it to be directed? 'Ow hare we to secure the bird?"

"Quite easily, I think. Only make it a positive

matter of plain yes or no, and I'll begin to put ye on the right track."

"Well, then, suppose *hI* hagree to follow *kup* your suggestion?" the major remarked, breathing more freely.

"I don't want no *supposin'*!" returned the scout, with emphasis; "when you swear, by the honour of a British officer, to take every reasonable pains to carry the matter through, I'll give ye all the knowledge ye'll need, and a matter of, say two hundred dollars in gold—to carry it out beyond fail!"

Earling started. "Then *you* 'ave reason to wish the young man *hout* of your *hown* way?" he suggested.

"I have," the scout candidly returned; "and, if you will assist me, I will not hesitate to give you my reasons in full. But, jist at the present, *supposin'* you make up yer mind as ter what ye'll do in the case."

The officer was in a quandary. The matter had been presented so suddenly, he had no time to deliberate. Had he done so, he would have remarked on the strange character of the man with whom he was conversing, and, quite likely, have refused to take the course he did.

"Come!" urged the scout, after a short lapse of time, "ye must have found yer mind by this time. Maybe ye fear the gold will not be comin'? Jist feel o' that," and he chucked several broad pieces in the palm outstretched to receive it.

The answer was given: "You may consider the matter settled!"

"Swear, then, on your honour as an officer and a man!"

The required oath was readily given.

"Now for the manner of *hexecution*," said Earling impatiently.

John uncocked his pistol, returned it deliberately to the belt, and seated himself beside the other.

"I think we can trust each other, now!" he remarked, with a sort of grim smile.

"Our interests here are one, at present," the officer responded.

"Now, then, my plan. You proposed to send two men to guard the cabin. Now, suppose you send six or seven, with orders to keep shady as possible. This boy is dead in love with the girl. I'll see him late in the afternoon, profess to come directly from there, and to bring a message of some kind, which will take him there at once. Now, mind you, there must be no fail! Your fellows must take him, and take him away, beyond all possibility of return! Do this, and bring me evidence 'tis done, and I wouldn't mind addin' a trifle to the sum I spoke of—say three hundred dollars."

"The plan looks good," mused the officer; "but may it not be the rangers will make an attack upon my soldiers, before the arrival of the game?"

"No danger there, captain; I'll use my own efforts, and Mark Winters will do the same, so that will be all right. It may make him rave a little, if he finds out what they came for, but never mind; you can explain matters to him."

"Leave that to me," was the rejoinder.

A few minor details were then entered into, and the two separated, the major taking his way with all speed toward camp, and the ranger striking off in an opposite direction.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN DURANCE VILE.

CHARLES SWEET was in a perturbed state of mind during the day succeeding the battle. Now that there was no immediate cause of excitement, and nothing to call for his presence or energies, his thoughts would run toward the little cabin in the glen; and the bright, winsome little maiden who had presented him with the Testament, of which previous mention has been made, seemed ever beckoning him to her side. Had the young man passed his life in the midst of society, he would, no doubt, have known what the reader already knows, that he was "in love" with pretty Martha Billings. But Charles knew nothing of the *divine passion* by any experience. They had not met often; scarcely had they spoken in more than a casual manner; yet each had felt an influence neither had experienced before—gentle and undeemonstrative, yet entirely irrepressible.

A deserted log-cabin had been the rendezvous of the scouts for that day, yet such were their habits of reckless activity, that, though not called forth by duty, seldom more than one or two were to be found at the resort. John Sweet had arrived at the cabin early in the morning, remained an hour or two, and then had taken his departure, casually requesting his son to remain in the vicinity until his return. True, the thought of visiting the cabin of Mark Winters did arise, and Charles would have spoken of it, but he was too accustomed to implicit obedience for even this, and he arranged to await the return of his father. The question arose, how should he pass the wearisome hours? Time never had hung so heavily, and, in his unconsciousness of the real cause, it

seemed a mystery that the hours should seem so long, A group were assembled in one corner of the cabin, engrossed in a pack of worn and dirty cards. Charles approached them and watched the game for a time, but it seemed suddenly to have lost all interest, and he moved away, half moodily.

Suddenly he recollected the little book, the gift of her toward whom his thoughts so constantly wandered. Strange that he had not thought of that before! At once it was taken from its hiding-place, a seat found, and the youth was deeply engaged in the story of the Saviour's life and sufferings.

It was considerably after noon when John Sweet returned. He at once sought the side of his son. There was a look and tone of careless kindness in his manner which was unusual, but Charles suspected nothing, and rejoiced that the ordinary sternness and unkindly feeling had been put off, for a while at least. The youth quickly put up his book, and looked up with some surprise as John took a seat near him.

"It's confounded dull to-day," was the preparatory remark, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, and then proceeded to fill his short, black pipe. He puffed away in silence. Charles waited some time in expectation of hearing something more, but perceiving his father was not in a communicative mood, he arose, took his rifle, and remarked that he intended to take a turn about the wood.

"What route will ye take?" the father asked, rising from his seat.

The youth paused and bit his lip. He had but one intention, and that was of reaching the Winters' cabin. But should he reveal to his father his intention? He

hesitated for a moment only ; his sense of honour prevailed, and he replied :—

“ I hardly know myself, father ; but I think I will walk toward the cabin over by the creek—though, perhaps, not as far.”

“ I was going to tell you,” the other remarked, in a careless sort of way, “ I was over there myself this mornin’, and we were speakin’ of you. Mr. Winters and the gal wanted ter see ye up there. I was a leetle surprised, but said nothin’ ; on’y told ’em I’d do the errand, and I presumed ye’d come up.”

“ But why did they wish to see me ?” the youth asked, in some surprise.

“ I’m sure I can’t tell anythin’ as to that. All I knows, I’ve told ye, and now you must solve the remainder to suit yourself. They seemed quite anxious, and, I guess, if ye had time, maybe ye’d better step up and see what’s the matter.”

“ Certainly I will,” Charles returned, frankly ; “ it will be quite easy for me to call and see what they wish. Should it be anything requiring immediate service, I suppose you will not feel uneasy at my absence ?”

“ Oh, certainly not,” was the reply, in an unusually gracious manner. “ Serve your friends in any way you can, reasonably, an’ we will get along without you, somehow.”

The parties separated—Charles to proceed upon his mission, and the father to repair to an appointed rendezvous, there to meet his fellow-conspirator, who, for a few pieces of gold, was prepared to stain his hands with a dishonourable act.

The youth pursued his way. His emotions were those of pleasure at once more seeing her whose very words

thrilled him as no joy ever before had stirred his soul. It was quite impossible to fix upon any reason which should have caused them to send a message to him. Numerous were his surmises, but all were dismissed in the uncertainty of the truth.

The distance intervening, and the caution necessary to be observed, were such, that it was quite late in the afternoon when Charles reached the clearing, within which stood the cabin of Mark Winters. He was quite sure that he was unobserved, and, merely pausing to assure himself that he was in presentable order, he moved forward with a quick, elastic step.

About noon the family had been surprised by the blaze of British uniforms through the trees, and, in a moment, six reckless, care-for-naught fellows stood before the dwelling. It was not without a slight misgiving that Mark stepped from his door, and inquired the nature of their visit. The reply was, that they were detailed to guard his house and person, that they had no instructions to answer further questions, and concluded by assuring him that they were "confounded hungry," a feeling they desired him speedily to relieve.

With as good grace as possible, Mark complied, yet it seemed to him that the feeding of six hungry Britons was quite as unpleasant as all the danger he might be called to face in their absence. After completing their repast, the satiated fellows seemed disposed to become more conversational, talked of the surprise and fight of the day before, their fancies and hopes, till four of the six rolled themselves upon the floor and slept, while their comrades kept a vigilant watch upon the forest in every direction.

As the afternoon passed slowly away, a visible im-

patience seemed to be apparent in these sentinels, who frequently exchanged significant glances and low remarks, which reached the ears of no one else.

No sooner, therefore, did Charles Sweet make his appearance, than the sleepers were aroused, bayonets carefully fixed, and the worthies ranged near the open door. The family being in the other apartment, and not in a position to note the approach of the young man, were not permitted to leave the room, and thus all were in ignorance of what was about to transpire.

Charles reached the door. He was upon the point of rapping for admittance, when the tarnished gleam of a British uniform just within startled him. He stepped back a pace, but before his thoughts could be collected, four strong men sprung from their covert, his rifle was wrenched from his grasp, strong hands were laid upon him, and in another moment he would have been secured.

The coolness and determination of the youth did not desert him at this important moment. With a strength and agility of which his frame gave little indication, he sprung from his would-be captors, and, freeing himself from their grasp, his first movement was to draw a pistol, which he levelled at one of his assailants. Had he at once taken to his heels, it is more than possible he would have escaped, minus a rifle and considerable portions of his hunting frock; but the movement of cocking and presenting the pistol, though almost instantaneous, gave his foes an opportunity to recover, and, although the weapon was discharged, and one of his opposers staggered back with a bullet in his body, the brave ranger was taken at a disadvantage, thrown to the ground, and his arms strongly pinioned.

Mr. Winters, in an agony of suspense, had been endea-

vying to reach the scene, though steadily repulsed by the guard, who allowed no egress from the apartment.

"E's ha deserter, zur, from hour ranks," replied the sentinel, in answer to the questions of Mark; "ha very ingracious young dog, zur, hupon my word. We learned is whereabouts, and, by ha little hartifice, you see we 'ave im secure."

The agitated pioneer could scarcely doubt the word of the apparently sincere soldier; yet it seemed a mystery that one so young and frank as Charles Sweet had seemed should be a British renegade. Though kind-hearted, Mark was just, and, forcing himself to believe that the prisoner really was guilty, he hardened his heart, and, with the remark that it seemed only military law, if the boy were really a deserter, he returned to the family, who, in fear and suspense, awaited the result. To them he communicated the information already gathered.

"Why, father!" exclaimed Martha, in surprise, "can you possibly believe anything of the kind? Have we not seen his father, and seen them together?"

"True, we have," was the calm reply, "and did we not at the same time remark how very dissimilar in appearance and manners they were—how free the language of the youth was from all hunter's idiom, and many other things of a like nature? After all, I fear we must have been deceived in him!"

Martha did not reply. She felt well assured that Charles Sweet was no Briton at all—much less a deserter; but, now that she reviewed all the circumstances, she could not but confess that the case, as it stood, seemed against him.

CHAPTER IX.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

SWEET, after parting with his son, proceeded in nearly a parallel course, and at a rate of speed quite as rapid as comported with personal safety.

"Talk about outwittin' Johnny Sweet," he mused, as he sped forward; "just as if the chap travelled these woods what could do it! Seems to me that feller in red clo'es 'll be a good deal smarter'n he is now, when he gets his three hundred dollars! *won't* he? Wonder if that red-coated scoundrel doesn't forget all about it?" he pursued. "It would be jist his caper. But never mind. If he does"—and Sweet patted his rifle fondly—"hyar's a gun as don't speak for nethin', when it talks to Injins, red-coats, or—or—somebody else. There's jist one thing about it—that boy mustn't come back from that ar' cabin; he's gittin' me into danger, and blame me if I am jest satisfied yet. Not satisfied, I say it candidly, Mark Winters!"

Nearly half an hour before Charles reached his destination, the elder Sweet was at the rendezvous, within fair rifle-shot of the cabin. He paused, but no sign was there of lurking Briton to await his coming. He then gave a quick, short whistle.

"Who goes there?" inquired the voice of Major Earling, who, hidden beneath the branches of a fallen tree, had escaped even the keen observation of the ranger.

"Shut your blarney!" ejaculated Sweet, in no amiable mood. "Do you want to bring down every Injin within forty miles right upon us?"

"Never fear, my friend," returned the major, in a conciliatory tone; "*hour* *hallies* would never 'arm an 'air *hof*

your 'ead, so long as you were with me. They *know me*—at least, I flatter myself they do !”

“Wal, I flatter *myself*,” growled the ill-tempered scout, “that if you should scare up Ben Williams or Dave Sayles, you wouldn’t know yourself long, nor anybody else either. Jes’ let me tell you, stranger, they’d skin yer head afore ye’d have time to change front.”

“*hIn* that case,” remarked the major, shrinking lower, and endeavouring to throw a *practical* glance around, “*hit* might, *hindeed*, be best to keep quite quiet, both of us ; so, if you will take *ha* seat ’ere, you will be *ha* little less *hexposed*.”

Sweet complied with the suggestion of his partner in iniquity.

“Now, then,” he commenced, ranging his rifle so that it bore directly upon the approaches to the cabin, “I suppose you have arranged everything as we spoke of doing, last night ?”

“You need ’ave no fears,” was the complacent reply. “We *h*officers in ’is Britannic Majesty’s *h*army *hare* not in the ’abit o’ doing things ’alf way, *hI* assure you. When *hI* gave my word that the boy *should* be cared for, you can believe it will be done *h*according to *h*agreement.”

“But I want ter jest tell yer, that thar’ mustn’t be no such word in it as *fail*, anyway. Remember, it will be a most sorry day for you if he should escape and get back here, *by any means*. I wouldn’t threaten, but I can tell you it would be no light matter.”

“Just so, just so, my friend ; *hI* ’ave guarded well *h*against that,” the officer quickly replied.

“But you know, the talk around is that there is going to be a gineralexchange o’ prisoners, an’ ye must devise some way so the boy don’t come in with the rest.”

Now it was that the self-importance of the officer began to develop itself into cheerful proportions. The little head was thrown back, the eyes fixed with a kind of scornful pride upon the rough ranger before him, while the left hand played idly with the hilt of his sword. For nearly a minute he maintained this attitude of unapproachable dignity; then he broke forth with a startling announcement:—

"You hure hentirely behind the hage hin which you live, my friend! Supposing that hI would botch up a job like this, by having 'im taken has ha common prisoner! No, indeed! My men, who are now secreted in yonder cabin, 'ave 'ad horders to arrest ha deserter, hand 'e will be so harrested, hand tried, in the most summary manner! hI know my points, hand would you mind, I shall not let the work be 'alf done."

"Give us yer paw, battle-cock!" exclaimed the scout, seizing the digits of the other, despite his freezing dignity of manner, and giving them a real backwoods grasp. "Blast yer eyes, but ye'd make a real good scout, with about twenty years o' practice in border-craft. But I suppose after the war you will find other use for yer talents besides takin' to the woods."

"hI presume it quite probable," was the stiff, and, in a manner, ungraceful reply. Earling saw that his points of fine display were all unappreciated by his rough listener, and a sort of freezing reserve was fast taking the place of his former imposing manner.

At length a silent figure appeared, gliding stealthily toward the cabin. The conspirators turned upon each other a quick look of intelligence.

"Now you will see hif my men fail of their work!" rather boastingly remarked the Briton, while the scout

only looked on in sullen, angry silence, for the *dénouement*.

The surprise and struggle were plainly visible to the guilty principals ; and, at the moment when Charles broke from the grasp of those who held him, it seemed that even then they might be disappointed. The scout resolutely cocked his rifle, and brought the sight full upon a point the youth must pass, should he attempt flight, while the important little major held his breath in suspense. In a short time the struggle was over, the captive youth was assisted to his feet, and led away between a file of his captors, the third assisting the wounded man to extemporise a bandage for the bleeding shoulder.

The issue seemed satisfactory to the interested parties within the cover of the forest, as the scout dropped the muzzle of the rifle, and Earling settled back with a look of deep disgust upon his features.

"All for the want of a little careful management," he muttered. "No need of a wounded man there, if they had only pursued the proper course. Just as likely to 'ave been killed as wounded."

"Don't growl, capt'in," urged the scout. "I didn't expect to see that done without one or two of your men gittin' keeled over ; for, let me jest tell ye—that boy's grit, and if he'd had any fair sight, would have whipped out the whole pile that you had there ! And he'd do it now, if he had his arms at liberty !"

"You seem to 'ave a 'igh opinion of the fellow's prowess," remarked the major, rather sneeringly.

The tone of the remark seemed to rouse what little of honour remained in the soul of the hardened man. Drawing himself to his full height, and fixing a meaning gaze upon the major, he exclaimed :—

"Jist you look a hyar, stranger; when you've knowed that boy, as I have done, for twenty years, through thick and thin, an' seen him in the tight places I have, you'll know he's not a chap to be played with. Sence you seem so doubtin' like, I'm blamed sorry he didn't knock over two or three o' your red-coated chaps, jist by way o' specimen."

The sharp rattling of two or three muskets, and the whizzing of at least one ball within an inch of the head of the scout, caused both the disputants to drop in quick time to the earth.

"Indians!" muttered the scout.

Cautiously raising his head above the log, to reconnoitre, the first object which greeted his vision was the flash of a musket, and a bullet lodged in the wood, within a hand's breadth of his face.

"That's likely shootin', that is!" he hissed, throwing his rifle across the log, and, in a moment more, it sent forth its fiery contents, with a sharp, whip-like crack.

No yell of pain or rage followed; but, instead, the dull, heavy fall of a body to the earth, gave ample assurance that the shot had taken effect.

"That's the way when this old gun says anything," he remarked, proceeding with desperate energy to reload his still smoking piece.

"'Old! 'old!" the frightened officer now found breath to say. "If they hare kindeed hour hown hallies, hI can control them; hif not, we must leave."

He sprung upon the log as he spoke, and glanced around for the first time since the opening volley. A single shot struck the scabbard of his sword, as he thus sprung into view, but it was evidently delivered before the Indians were aware of the character of the man.

"Old ! warriors, 'old !" he commanded, at the top of his voice, raising his hand as a signal, and standing in a most tragical attitude.

The Indians, for such they were, awed somewhat by the presence of an officer whom they in a measure feared, and appalled by the sudden death of one of their band, crawled quietly away, leaving the undaunted major and the fearless scout in full possession of the ground. For some time the former maintained his position, until satisfied that the dusky warriors were duly impressed with his presence, when, lowering his uplifted arm, he solemnly commanded :—

"Now, not hanother shot shall be fired ; the man who does so shall be hat once harrested !"

A burst of laughter from the reckless scout greeted the pompous delivery of the speech.

"I reckon, capt'in," was the jeering remark, "I reckon ye'll never hear any more shots fired. Rayther guess nary a red nigger'll dare look at his gun for a week to come ! You are a hoss, you are, stranger, an' a trump, too !"

Every appearance of the haughty little officer showed that he was excessively annoyed ; but he dared not avow as much to the man before him, and soon they separated ; he of the sword setting his face rather dissatisfiedly toward camp, while Sweet shaped his course toward the general rendezvous of the scouts, well satisfied with the result of his mission. He had seen the young man borne away, had received the assurance that he should be summarily dealt with, and, when once satisfied that such was the case, Major Earling might obtain the promised gold —*if he could !*

CHAPTER X.

BEN AND LUKE AT HOME.

To Ben Williams especially had the defeat of the American forces been sore and disagreeable. Hating with an inveterate hatred the red man, and all connected with him, he had come to regard a red-coat with little less of bitterness. Of course to such a person the undecided state of affairs at Fort Meigs, following so many reverses and defeats in that direction, could but be galling. Though but few words escaped those schooled lips, he felt none the less deeply, and, as his was not a disposition to lie in idle waiting, no sooner did the morning dawn than he was away, anxious to meet and defeat the crafty savages, who, he doubted not, would swarm through every portion of the forests, bent upon their inhuman errands of blood.

Through the weary hours of the long day did the restless ranger rove the forest, his vigorous limbs knowing no fatigue—and woe betide the roving savage whose path crossed that of the desperate rover—his doom was sure!

It was near evening. For the first time since early dawn the athletic Ben seemed to have forgotten his passion for revenge; and now, seated in a small retreat, secured from observation by rocks and bushes, he was sparingly partaking of the dried meat, which upon such occasions formed his only diet. The cheerful waters of the stream which, a short distance above, passed the cabin of Mark Winters, here laved the rocks at his feet. A solid and impenetrable wall of stone rose upon the left hand and behind him, while upon the right, and effectually screening the view in front, rose thick clusters of bushes.

A place more secure from external observation could scarcely be found for miles.

Ben had concluded his scant repast, sufficient, however, for his need, and now seemed upon the point of relapsing into moody silence and inattention. His huge wooden pipe was drawn from its lurking place, filled with tobacco, and the spark applied. There, resting his head against the solid wall, he proceeded to pour forth volumes of smoke, while his senses seemed wrapped in entire oblivion.

Although his constant watchfulness and caution was in a great degree relaxed, the scout's senses were keenly alive to all that was passing around him. He was perfectly sensible that a party was approaching from above, and he also knew at once that it could not be Indians. The firm, regular footfalls were far too heavy for any of the aboriginals, and he was but a moment in deciding that it must be the tramp of soldiers. There remained but one question: were they American or British?

He opened the bushes, and peered cautiously forth. There they were, upon the opposite bank, scarcely twenty yards distant, passing at a quick pace down the bank of the stream. For a moment Ben gazed with eager anxiety.

"Yas, Britishers, jist what I 'spected. Not all of 'em, either; there is one feller, and, blame me, if his hands ain't tied! The Injin-cahooting scamps hev picked up a prisoner somewhere, an' calkilate tew get one o' their own men in 'change; maybe they'll take him off three or four miles, all in quiet—"

At this moment the prisoner turned his head, and the aroused scout caught sight of those familiar features. He sprang to his feet with a sudden bound, and his rifle was

levelled in a moment. He did not fire, however. Slowly he allowed the muzzle to drop, and finally it rested on the ground. Bowing his head upon the butt of his weapon, the ranger mused to himself:—

“So the red cusses have got Charley, hev they? Well, I’ll be bound they didn’t git him without hot work! But that don’t do anything towards gettin’ him away from ’em, the red-coated, red-hearted imps. I am in a fix, and no mistake. I can’t find any of the boys mos’ likely, an’ four are *rayther* too many for old Ben, since they’re Britishers; *Injins* would be another thing. It’s jist possible some o’ the boys may be in call,” and Ben emerged from his leafy covert, giving a long, peculiar whistle, which penetrated the forest far and near. A pause for a moment, and he repeated the call, listening for any response which might be made.

Nearly a minute passed, and the countenance of the scout grew momentarily longer. Suddenly from a distance came a faint response, barely audible, yet in a moment it fired the anxious listener with fresh zeal, and marking the course taken by the party with the prisoner, he slung his rifle over his shoulder, and moved briskly in the direction of the signal. Quite a distance the scout passed rapidly and noiselessly; then he paused for a moment, and repeated the signal-call. It was returned, this time quite promptly, and at less than half the distance. In two minutes more the two personages had caught sight of each other, and were soon standing with hands grasped in the most cordial manner.

“How are ye, Samps?” was the greeting of Ben, upon meeting the new comer, and,

“Bless my picter, if this don’t be Ben Williams!” was the characteristic salute of the new character.

A word in passing may not be inappropriate, as taken in connexion with the character who is thus unceremoniously called before the reader. Luke Sampson was an individual of that class who, from the earliest periods of our history, have played the part of pioneers, vibrating between the advancing civilian and the retreating aborigine. Thrown in early life upon his own resources, and being naturally drawn toward the frontier, he had passed many years in the precarious mode which presents so little of quiet with so much stirring adventure and excitement. Luke was a character, in his own way, daring and zealous, when his heart was enlisted in the work before him, yet tender-hearted as a woman when called to witness sorrow or suffering of any description. He could pass through the most sanguinary conflict with all the steady valour of a veteran, and when it was concluded, the sight of a single person suffering in any manner, would even call the tears to his bronzed cheek.

It was with a deal of satisfaction that Ben Williams met with this man upon the present occasion. Together they had passed through dangers, and each knew the temperament and disposition of the other.

"Samps, you are jist the man I wanted tew see!" impulsively exclaimed Ben, as he grasped the hand of his fellow scout; "I've a job on hand, and I want some help."

"Eh! what's up?" was the expectant inquiry.

"You know Charley Sweet?"

"Sure I do, and a fine lad he is."

Ben proceeded to relate the facts of his captivity, so far as known to him. "Now," he continued, "there's only one thing in this case: Charley shan't go into the British camp as a prisoner! I will make an effort to git him

away myself, but if you will go with me the thing will be sure. Now, what say you?"

"I'll *do*!" was the emphatic answer. Luke had an impediment in his speech, which gave the sound of *d* instead of *g*, but in all other respects, save one or two of similar nature, his speech was quite like that of the borderers.

"Then come," remarked Ben.

In a moment they were speeding along through the underbrush, which was dense in some places, keeping near the edge of the stream, which ran quite near the British head-quarters, and the course of which the party in question would no doubt pursue till they reached their destination.

"This way," remarked Ben, leading into a half-perceptible trail, which took them rapidly from the stream. "They'll work down that way, and we'll drop in ahead of 'em."

A few words expressed the plan in full, and the determined couple lost no time in carrying the project out. A rapid walk of a mile brought them again to the banks of the creek, and here they paused for a moment to examine the ground. The decision, soon arrived at, was that no one had passed that way.

"We must wait for them," Ben remarked, glancing around for a place of concealment. The sun was low, and objects were fast blending in a dim indistinctness. But, although the place was very favourable for action, there was no opportunity for concealment.

"See here, this be a *dood* plan," remarked Luke, throwing himself prone upon the ground, his rifle beneath him, and remaining perfectly motionless. "These soldiers have dot no eyes for stouts; they never could see us."

Ben stepped back a few paces, and the idea seemed to strike him quite favourably. There was no alternative now, however, since the tread of the approaching party was heard at less than fifty yards distant. Ben threw himself beside his prostrate companion, and in silence they awaited the coming of those they sought.

Nearer and nearer came the careless party, stalking along in fancied security and elated with the success of their mission. They did not perceive those silent, motionless figures beside their path, but Charles did not pass them unnoticed. With a sudden move he slipped from his captors and approached the prostrate figures.

"Shoot him! Fire on the deserter!" said his guards, and the three valiant soldiers of Britain prepared to discharge their weapons at the youth.

Imagine their surprise when, as from the earth, sprung up two Herculean figures, the figures of those they knew but to dread. In a moment two rifles bore upon them, and as one, better prepared than his comrades, raised his musket, the long rifle of Ben uttered its death-note, and he fell back with a bullet through his head. Simultaneously with the report of the rifle Ben sprung into their midst, and, with a crushing blow of the stock, swept another of the doomed party to the earth.

Luke had not been idle. No sooner had the rifle of his companion sounded the attack than his own weapon sent its leaden messenger through the brain of another red-coated soldier. Snatching a pistol from his belt, Sampson sprung forward, levelling it at the head of the fourth and only remaining Briton.

"Spare me, oh spare me!" the frightened fellow exclaimed, "I am already wounded!"

"But what are you doing to do with this fellow?"

Luke asked, while Ben was unbinding the arms of Charles.

In reply the fellow stated that they had been sent out to arrest our hero as a deserter, and the candid manner in which he related the story, coupled with the corroboration of Charles, finally convinced the scouts that the unfortunate men had been but the tools of some designing wretch. In the meanwhile the one who had been stricken senseless slowly recovered, and taking them prisoners and the weapons of the slain, the party turned their faces once more up stream.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR—A REVELATION.

JOHN SWEET passed a very uneasy night. Despite his character, there was something appalling in the consideration that he had at last consummated the plan which had haunted him for years. Turn which way he would, the picture, silent and stern, of the helpless youth, submitting to a cruel fate, would remain ever present before him. But the hours rolled on, and finally the courted slumber sunk upon his weary lids. Still, in his dreams, he beheld the pale, spectre-like face, and wild, fearful visions seemed to float before him.

With morning's earliest ray he was astir, but his weary eyes gave ample evidence that he had not been refreshed by his slumber. There was still one resource, and John was not long in resorting to this. A small keg of whiskey had been concealed in the flooring of the old cabin, and watching the opportunity when all were absent, he removed this, and filling a large, leathern flask, replaced the keg and wandered from the spot. In half-an-

hour he returned ; the flask had been emptied, and he was barely able to stand upon his feet. Those whom he met, knowing his condition, passed him silently, and staggering within the cabin, he threw himself upon a pile of boughs, and was instantly locked in the stupor of a drunken doze.

It was considerably past noon when he awoke. Taking a fresh draught of whisky to arouse his benumbed faculties, he grasped his rifle and left the place. He had an appointment to meet Major Earling that afternoon, to receive the assurance that the fatal deed had been consummated. True his head ached, and there seemed a dimness in his vision, but he rightly attributed this to the liberal potations of whisky which he had imbibed, and, after bathing his face and head in the water of a small stream, he felt much better. By the most strenuous exertions he succeeded in bringing his mind to a state of semi-clearness, and when he reached the rendezvous he found himself prepared for the interview. As he expected, Major Earling was waiting for him—evidently with impatience.

Avoiding the more frequented portions of the route, the expectant Briton hastened toward the camp, and, on his arrival, turned his steps at once to the quarters of the guard. To his infinite surprise, the party having the prisoner in charge had not arrived. Giving orders to be awakened upon the arrival of any party, he repaired to his tent and was soon asleep. Not until the shrill call of reveille roused the forest echoes did he awake. He at once hastened to learn the true state of affairs. No party had arrived ! A fresh detail was at once despatched, and they returned in about two hours, bearing the dead bodies of the soldiers. True, those cold lips of lifeless

clay could tell no story, but matters were all explained by their presence.

It was no unusual thing to see men thus, and though the matter provoked a certain amount of inquiry, it soon died away; the corpses were buried, and everyone save those especially interested had forgotten the matter.

Major Earling, in his bewilderment, had recourse to the same stimulus which had driven dull care from the brain of his fellow-plotter, and, in proportion as he imbibed did his faculties become sharpened, until, before noon, the little major was boiling with indignation at the thought that such a "Yankee trick" had been played upon him. His mind, however, was determined upon retaliation, and stealthily leaving camp, taking with him but his servant, Pat O'Clacy, well armed, he proceeded to the cabin of Mark Winters, where he found the two men who had been detailed for that purpose still in waiting. Withdrawing them, he proceeded to the place of rendezvous, and soon succeeded in posting them under tolerable cover, within calling distance of the spot where the interview would take place. Pat was also posted near them, and the final instructions given.

"Quite likely," he said, in a tone of certainty, "the Yankee scouts will endeavour to take or murder me. You must be upon the look-out, and in case I call, or any weapons are discharged, be upon the spot at once!"

Earling awaited the arrival of Sweet, who, as we have seen, was soon upon the spot. Feeling that all must now be right, the scheming ranger advanced with a smile, but drew back upon meeting the angry look of the officer in red. For a few moments each stood regarding the other closely, though from quite different motives. At length the Briton spoke:—

"Well, Yankee, you 'ave played a trick hupon me, hI perceive. Much good may it do you, hⁱn the hend!"

"Can't say 't I 'zactly understand your meanin'," remarked Sweet, with a dubious look upon his face, though beginning to understand that all was not as it should be.

"Then you pretend to say," demanded the Briton, growing wroth, "that you were not accessory to the murder 'of my men, last night, while on their way to camp, and the rescue of the prisoner, for whose h^apprehension you were so h^aeager?"

In an instant the scout sprung to his feet, while the angry blood rushed to his face in torrents.

"What is that ye say?" he fairly yelled; "the boy rescued or escaped, and you here to tell me of it? Tell me what you mean, you red-coated villain!"

He reached forward, and would have grasped the officer by the throat, but, avoiding the intended grasp, he proceeded to explain occurrences. Sweet remained silent, chagrined and angered. The muddling effects of the whisky upon his brain were still apparent, and it required a strong effort for him to concentrate his faculties sufficiently to express his ideas with intelligence. To the imputation of Earling that he was an accomplice in the rescue, he paid no attention, until the officer, in plain words, made the accusation, grasping him by the arm.

"No, ye don't!" the scout exclaimed, shaking off the hand as though it had been a child's. "It's bad enough, if you've failed, arter all yer boastin', but when ye come to try that game, ye'd better ha' got yer coffin afore ye come!"

"Don't threaten, don't get hangry," interposed the officer; "hI 'ave lost four of my best men, and hI ham sure if you did want the boy put hout of 'arms way, my

loss 'as been greater than yours. Now, can you not see that you stand *kin ha* suspicious light?"

John Sweet was not in a frame of mind to waste words. He gazed for a moment upon the soldier with burning eyes, then drawing himself up, with all his strength he aimed a furious blow full at the head of the unlucky officer. Earling, however, was upon his guard. Eluding the blow, he grappled with his antagonist. The movement was an unlucky one for the officer. Fully inured to this style of conflict, Sweet in a moment was upon his fallen foe, with each hand clenched upon his throat. In a few moments more the protruding eyes of the major would have seen the last of earth. In vain he endeavoured to call upon the waiting trio who were secreted almost within striking distance; in vain he strove to free his neck from that iron grasp. The swollen tongue already pressed from the mouth; the glaring eyes were starting from their sockets, when a last, and, as it proved, an effective thought, flashed through the brain of the struggling man. With a dying effort he reached his pistols, and drawing forth the one upon which his hand rested, turned the muzzle upon his triumphant foe, and fired!

The movement answered a double purpose. Sweet sprung to his feet, glaring wildly around, scarcely able to comprehend the cause of the loud report and the pangs he felt. The trio of red-coats rushed from their hiding-places. At the same moment another party rushed upon the scene.

Ben Williams, Luke Sampson, and Charles Sweet, after disposing of their prisoners and obtaining a few hours' sleep, had set themselves to the work of ferreting

out, if possible, the persons concerned in the design upon the life or liberty of the young ranger. For that purpose they had kept a strict watch for any suspicious character who might leave the British lines, feeling assured that thus they would be able to obtain some clue. Nor did they fail. Major Earling was discovered, traced to the rendezvous, and his plans and schemes were partially overheard, as well as the interview which followed between the scout and the officer.

No sooner, therefore, did affairs reach their crisis, than the three borderers dashed upon the scene. The soldiers had reached the place, but the wild yell of these savage-looking men, and their terrible aspect, was too much for even their steady valour, and, with but a glance at their struggling leader, they turned and fled, leaving the ground and their strangled commander to the foe.

Major Earling, though scarcely conscious, managed to struggle to his feet, but it was only to meet his doom. The wounded scout had dropped his rifle, and stood wildly endeavouring to steady himself upon his feet. A momentary flash of strength seemed to animate him; he drew a pistol, and levelling it at the head of Earling, fired—the bullet passing directly through the brain.

Simultaneously the two men fell, never again to rise upon earth! The Briton gave but a single motion, and he was dead.

Luke had already knelt beside the prostrate scout, while Ben was dashing through the forest in pursuit of the flying foe. Even at the moment, the sharp report of his long rifle sounded upon the air, and soon he rejoined them, the satisfied expression upon his features telling only too plainly that his bullet had not sped in vain.

For some minutes the wounded scout lay with so little

life or motion that it seemed, indeed, he too had passed away. Not long did they remain in suspense. Gradually the breath returned, and grew stronger; soon the gaze became clearer, and the dying man moaned:—

“It’s all up with me, this time; I’m dying, but I am not prepared for that. My life has been all in vain. Tell me, where is Charles?”

“Here I am, father,” the youth remarked, stepping to his side.

“No, no,” the sufferer returned, shaking his head slowly and sorrowfully; “call me no more father; you are no son of mine! I have wronged you, and I would have killed you, but it was not permitted. I will tell you all, but first let me be supported to yonder cabin; I feel stronger now, and I cannot die until I have seen Mark Winters!”

Ben and Luke raised the suffering man, who moaned with pain; but as they were bearing him away, he said to Charles, in a pain-tinged voice:—

“There is my rifle—take it, and keep it. It is a good weapon, and not to blame for the faults of its owner.”

Charles raised the weapon as directed, but his thoughts were in too great a whirl of excitement for him to think. The strange discovery, only partially made even now, that he was not the son of John Sweet, but of some one else; the inhuman attempt upon his life, its failure, and the startling events now transpiring, filled him with the deepest emotion.

As they reached the cabin, Mark Winters stepped forth to meet them, and to render any assistance in his power. He had heard the reports so near his cabin, and, upon their appearance, had at once determined that something fatal had happened. In his peculiar style, Ben informed

Mark of the condition of the wounded man, and his earnest request to be brought over to the cabin before dying.

"Anything which I can do shall be cheerfully done," was the heartfelt assurance of Mark.

Oh! how like coals of fire did those words sear upon the heart of the sinking man! He endeavoured to speak, but Luke, who acted in the capacity of nurse, would not permit it, requesting him to wait until he could speak more at his ease. A couch was soon in readiness, and upon it the convulsed form was placed. Mark was immediately at his side with a flask, and urged him to partake.

"Take a few swallows of this," he said, "it no doubt will strengthen you."

John raised the flask to his lips, and drank with avidity. The draught seemed to revive him in a measure. Then, with a powerful effort, he applied himself to the work in hand.

"Mark Winters," he said, fixing his eyes full upon the sympathising countenance of the other, "do you not know me?"

There was a hollow depth and significance in the question which startled the listeners; he bent forward, and scanned the haggard, bearded lineaments in vain. He could discover there no trace of any features he had previously known.

"I know you as John Sweet, a scout, but in no other character," he replied.

"No, no, Mark," the dying scout returned, "I am not John Sweet, but your worst enemy, who has wronged you beyond all possibility of repair. I it was who stole your child from your own door, years ago!"

Mark Winters started back a pace from the side of the

dying man, and for a moment it seemed he could not credit his own senses.

"The man who stole my child!" he exclaimed; "do I hear aright?"

"You do; but listen. I am Sam Brown. You will remember the sound beating you gave me, when I spoke of Agnes Henton in such a sneering, familiar manner! I waited until I saw how you loved your child, and then I took that way of obtaining my revenge."

"But my boy, what of him? Does he still live?" broke in the agitated parent.

"He lives," returned the scout, in a stronger tone of voice, "and a nobler youth is there nowhere. The world has known him as my son, but, since fate has decreed that he shall be restored to your heart, I rejoice that I can in part undo the work of misery I have done."

Mark looked upon all present in succession, but it was evident he did not fully comprehend matters. The dying scout raised his head and beckoned Charles nearer his side.

"This is your son, Mark Winters," he said hoarsely, "the child whom, nineteen years since, I took from your hearts and home!"

His hand fell nervelessly beside him as he ceased speaking; his lips quivered, and Luke sprung to his side, fearing the dread moment had come. But it was only the passing of a momentary pang, and in a few moments he was stronger.

Meantime, the reunited father and son stood gazing upon each other, while the trembling mother pressed forward, convulsed by emotion beyond power of utterance.

"My own lost Edward! Is it possible? Oh, God! is it true?" she cried, with mingled agony and expectancy.

"Not a doubt of it," broke in Ben; "if you'll only look in a glass, ye'll see it fer yerself. As like you as your twin!"

"I cannot doubt that I am, indeed, your son," our hero returned, "since the confession of the man I supposed was my father; as I could see no motive which could cause him to utter a falsehood upon his death-bed."

"You need not fear that I intend to deceive you," the scout remarked, in a low voice. "I swear to you, by all that is holy, that you are indeed father and son!"

The mother had been scanning the features of Edward (for so we must now call him), and now she threw her arms about his neck.

"It is, it *is* my dear Edward!" she exclaimed, as she fell upon his neck and was clasped to his bosom.

"God be thanked!" responded Mark Winters, as the big tears of joy and emotion rolled down his furrowed cheeks.

They now turned to him who had injured them. A faint smile seemed to dwell upon his features, and he extended his hand with a beseeching look.

"Mark Winters," he said, slowly, and with considerable effort, "and you, Agnes, it is a great favour I ask, very great, but I am dying—soon I shall be gone; can you, will you, forgive me?"

"Sorrow and misery have been mine," slowly replied the person addressed. "The best years of my manhood have all been embittered by your cruelty; yet now, if you feel truly penitent, I will forgive you, and pray God to do the same!"

"Oh! I thank you, I thank you," murmured the stricken man; and, turning his beseeching gaze towards Agnes, he continued: "You, too, I have wronged, if

possible, more deeply than the father, but I never thought then of this hour. Can you, too, forgive the sorrow I have caused you?"

For a moment there was a struggle in the breast of the weeping mother, but the true womanly nature triumphed, and stepping forward she placed her hand within that of the suppliant, saying as she did so:—

"I forgive you. Soon you must appear before a higher tribunal than any of earth, and I hope you will find a free forgiveness there."

With a weary smile the sinking penitent turned toward Edward, and though his lips half moved several times, he forbore to speak.

"You would say something?" the youth asked, in a kindly tone, bending nearer.

"I would have besought your forgiveness also," he faintly answered, "but I feel I have no hope. I have wronged you too deeply for that!"

"Not so," the youth replied, placing his hand within the palm of the sufferer, "I cannot treasure up wrongs and injuries; let them be forgotten; they are all forgiven."

Sam Brown, the tears rolling from his eyes, wrung the hand he held within his grasp, but for some moments he did not speak. The efforts he had already made seemed to have exhausted him, and he lay in a state of quietude for nearly ten minutes. At length he said:—

"Fate has decreed that right shall triumph, and I am glad. For nineteen years I have been enjoying the fruits of my revenge, and yet it has been but a burden of misery to me. I reared Edward as my own son, and it is but justice to say that I was proud of him. It was my ambition to see him excel in all manly pursuits.

Nothing changed my determination till the war broke out, and we came to this place. I knew you at once, Mark Winters, despite the ravages of time and sorrow, but I saw that I was unknown. Edward found a deep attraction here, and I knew it was impossible to avoid final discovery. Fearing the consequences, I resolved to rid the earth of the noble boy. I was saved this crowning crime, and now I must meet my fate!"

The wretched man spoke no more. In an hour he was dead, and, in a quiet, secluded place, at no great distance, a rude grave was dug, and the lifeless clay was placed therein, while beside him were laid the Briton, and the soldier who had fallen before the fated rifle of Ben. No stone marked their last resting-place; no tear of fond mourner ever watered the turf above them. As Sam Brown had lived so he died—alone and uncared for, and, throughout the wide world, no human being felt they had lost a friend.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE WILDERNESS.

The party returned from the burial with feelings of a pleasureable sadness. The life of passion and crime which had been revealed by that dying man had opened anew the long-sealed fountains of love, and even death was forgotten in the conflicting emotions of the hour. How strange did it seem to the parents, as they gazed upon the manly form of Charles Sweet—as he had been known—that he was indeed their son; the same little Edward, who, upon a delightful evening, just nineteen years before, had played so merrily around the door of their New England home.

The emotions of Ben Williams were of a different nature. His comparatively short acquaintance with Edward had given him the highest esteem for the young scout. But when he reflected upon the wretched experiences of the young man's past life, his feelings proved too strong for him; tears trickled slowly down his bronzed cheek. With a start, and an exclamation, he dashed them away, and looked up to encounter the glance of Edward.

"I thought Ben Williams was beyond all sich feelin'," he remarked, hastily; "but when I think what a life that man led, an' how he used you, it is too much for my time!"

"You have ever been my friend, Ben!" Edward exclaimed, warmly; "and I think sometimes it was only your friendship that influenced him to be as lenient toward me as he was during the last few months."

"It's more'n likely, youngster; it's more'n likely!" Ben returned with a shake of the head. "The fact was, when first we met I took a likin' to ye, which I don't unless a feller is about one of my kind, generally. Jack knew what I thought of you, but he rather tried to prejudice me ag'in' ye; but 'twas no sort of go, not that! But seein' as he's gone under, why let it drift, and we'd better think right away of what we are goin' to do."

"It seems to me that we had better leave this place," suggested Edward. "The fall of Major Earling will be reported to the army, and this cabin will then be made too hot for habitation."

"Exactly, my boy. Your head is all right, let your father be who he may. All that I fear now, is, that yer new father will not be ready to start soon enough, and we shall have warm work in reaching the fort."

Edward would have pledged himself that his father

would not be unreasonable, but at that moment the person in question approached, and announced that a hasty supper awaited their attention.

"Prehaps we may as well eat here," replied Ben, "for we *have* to do that; but let us swallow our grub in a hurry, and be off, for nobody need think of stayin' in this house to-night."

"Then you apprehend danger?" Mark groaned.

"Indeed, I do, and the very worst kind of danger, too. Do you see—they rascals what run when the major got killed, will take the story straight to the camp, and in less than an hour more, we may look to see these woods swarm with the painted imps!"

The party of six gathered round the humble board; the frugal, yet invigorating repast was swallowed with few remarks. Nothing was allowed to interfere with the progress of the meal, and in a space of time which would have astonished even a railroad saloon-keeper, they all rose from the table.

"Now, then, for the fort!" remarked the father, as he rose. "You," indicating Ben, "will direct us, and please to consider all under your orders until we reach a place of safety."

"Then, in the first place," Ben returned, "get ready without delay. Take what things ye can't get along without, but don't try to carry everything. Make them up into snug little bundles, and as soon as possible strike into the woods, jist to the left of where we buried them chaps. Luke and me will go out and take a look to see there's nothin' on foot to disturb our plans. You, young man, stay with yer father and the women, to see that no time is lost."

He motioned to his companion as he spoke, and

together they glided from the cabin. All waited for a short time, half expecting to hear them greeted by a savage yell, but silence reigned, and in a moment the tall forms of the hardy adventurers disappeared beneath the leafy covert.

All in the cabin seemed duly impressed with the importance of time. The females' wardrobes were collected, and Edward busied himself in arranging them in snug bundles. Mark took his rifle, which he closely examined, and a quantity of ammunition. Then from its hiding place he drew forth a small bag of gold, which he carefully secured beneath his belt.

"That, Edward," he remarked, "is a remnant of my better days! True, that is not all I possess, yet I am in reality a poor man, and all I can give you, my dear son, will be an inheritance of poverty!"

"Do not speak of that, father," the youth replied. "I could scarcely tell gold from brass, and I have no need of the dross. My wants are few,—quite easily supplied; and with strong arms and vigorous health, I can easily work my own way."

At this moment the women entered the apartment in readiness. A small quantity of provisions had been taken, and the most necessary articles of clothing, which formed all that the party could transport with ease.

"These are quite sufficient," remarked Edward, as he raised one of the bundles. "A strong detail of soldiers will be at once sent out, who will bring in whatever else may be needed; and, unless I much mistake, this state of affairs can last but little longer. Let us be going, for Ben will be awaiting us quite impatiently, no doubt."

With tumultuous hearts did the party set forth, and a

few steps brought them to the point designated by the scout. As they reached the place, Ben stepped forward to meet them.

"All's safe, I guess," he remarked. "Luke hasn't got in yet; he went the other way, but blessed little chance a red has with Scamps!"

"Shall we wait for him?" asked Mark.

"No matter, no matter about that," said Ben. "He knows which way we go, and will be up with us before we get far. So, we'll lead off, and let him come at his own convenience."

Bending his ear to the earth, and listening intently to assure himself that Luke was not near at hand, the scout looked once more within his rifle pan, as was his inviolable custom, and led the way into the depths of the forest.

Lonely, indeed, and fraught with danger, seemed those wilds to the trembling women. As the dry leaves rustled, or twigs crackled beneath their incautious tread, they would start and look around in fear, half expecting to behold the painted visages of blood-thirsty savages. Mark, though more calm, was equally well aware of the critical nature of their situation, and observed the utmost caution. Notwithstanding all this, the sound of the moving party must have reached a long distance into the forest upon every hand, and Edward, who brought up the rear, felt almost nervous with apprehension lest some lurking savage or hostile band should catch the sound.

Ben Williams, with his rifle thrown upon his shoulder, led the van, stalking forward with the precision of a walking automaton, looking, however, rapidly to the right and left, as he pushed a-head, with steady, silent tread.

Ten minutes might have passed, when the quick ear of

Ben caught the light sound of a step at a very little distance. Abruptly he paused, and listened for a moment eagerly. Then his countenance cleared.

"It's Luke!" he said, in a low voice. "I knew he would come out all safe!"

In a moment the person spoken of stepped into view, and rapidly drew near, raising his finger as a signal of caution.

"What is up, Luke?" whispered Ben.

"*Indians!*"

"Where?"

"'Bout the tabin," was the quiet response.

"How many? What are they up to?"

"Don't know how many. Should say twenty—may be more. They tame very tateful; maybe we've time to det to the fort; we'd better try!"

"Smelt our track?" queried Ben.

"They had not!" was the reply. "I suppose when they find nobody in the shanty it won't take 'em long to make out which way we have *done!*"

"Risk the red niggers for that!" remarked Ben. "We'll find 'em on our track quick enough, an' if there don't be ha'r-pullin' afore we gits to the fort, I'll be thankful, for the sake o' the women. Seems too ragged bad to mix 'em up in sich rough work. But you, Samps, take to the rear, an' make sure you keeps a sharp watch. If the cut-throats come too fast, give us warnin', somehow."

"Let me alone to do that!" was the self-complacent reply, and, crouching low, Luke allowed the party to pass, while he kept a close scrutiny upon the trail.

"Luke will keep a good watch behind us," said Ben, "and as we can take care they don't come up some

other way, blame me if I don't think we'll outwit them at last. If the rascals try to cut around us, they'll be sure to go this way," indicating the right. "So, I'll spread out this way myself, and you, youngster, lead on to the fort. Be sure, now, ye keep straight ahead, an' make yer best time. If anything is up I'll let yer know soon enough. Be careful, now, and *go ahead!*"

Striking off to the left, in a very few moments his burly form was hidden by the intervening foliage and trees.

The sun was fast sinking to the horizon. Here and there the level beams would find some opening, and pour a mellow stream far into the deepening gloom of the forest. How like some ray of hope to cheer a darkened path! Feathered songsters, in every tree-top, filled the air with floods of melody, while the breeze murmured through the leafy boughs. Not one in that flying group but felt and knew the rare beauty of the scene, and yet not one but felt the presence of death in the very air.

Edward led the way, and his rapid pace fast diminished the distance between the little party and the strong place of refuge they sought. Quick as was his step, both his mother and Martha trod close upon his heels, while the father, at a short distance, formed a rear-guard.

Soon a familiar landmark caught the youth's eye.

"We are half way to the fort!" he joyfully exclaimed, "Courage, mother—Martha! we shall be safe in a short time. I know every foot of the ground, and hardly would a party of Indians dare to tread the soil. They have learned too many lessons there already!"

Not the least idea had he that danger could be *before* them, relying as he did so implicitly upon the skill and judgment of Luke and Ben. True, he peered cautiously

in advance of him, but the coming gloom rendered objects in a measure indistinct. He heard the gentle purling of the waters of a little stream close by, and turning to make sure all in whom he felt so deep an interest were at hand, he opened the bushes which fringed its banks, preparatory to springing across. The very moment he thus turned, a savage sprang up almost at his very feet and with a quick blow of his hatchet, felled the young man to the earth. The blow intended to cleave the skull, by the uncertain position of all parties, missed its aim, and a slight contusion only was given. In an instant a dozen red-men sprang up from the channel of the stream, pouring themselves in a resistless body upon the surprised party.

Although caught unawares, Mark did not lose his presence of mind, and quickly raised his rifle upon the appearance of the foe. Before it could be discharged, the weapon was grasped by a huge savage, when a fierce struggle for possession took place. In the midst of the commotion, Mark found himself seized from behind, his arms drawn back, the weapon forced from his grasp, and himself a close prisoner.

Meanwhile the women were seized and bound, their cries being silenced by the furious displays of knife and tomahawk, in fearful proximity to their faces. Edward had not entirely lost consciousness, although the confusion and pain had been too great to allow him to make any exertions in his own behalf. Before he fully realised his situation his arms were pinioned, and he, too, was a captive.

So rapid and noiseless had been the work of the savages that scarcely the slightest alarm had been created. True, there had been the hurried commotion and rapid falling

of feet, accompanied by a few guttural exclamations and slight cries of terror; but that was all. No weapon had been discharged, no loud shouts or outcries had broken the forest silence.

In a few minutes the entire party had been captured, bound, and pushed back into the shadow of the willows. Thus far Edward had been dragged, but now he arose to his feet, and gazed upon his captors. Of their number it was difficult to determine, since their skulking forms were half hidden in the bushes; but the youth saw at a glance that the party was so large as to render all hope of present succour useless. His bear-skin cap had been knocked away by the blow upon his head, and the place was burning, as if with fire. Dropping upon his knees, Edward managed to immerse the wound in the running water. Oh, how cool and delightful was the sensation which at once pervaded his unnerved system! The blood, which a moment before seemed rushing back upon his heart, now bounded with fresh energy through his veins, and the young ranger felt himself once more a man.

Not long was he allowed this precious privilege. The savages noticed its reviving influences, and soon a stalwart brave grasped the youth by the arm, and drew him to his feet. A portion of the party, leading Mark his wife, and Martha Billings, already had started down the stream, and, after satisfying themselves that Edward could walk, the remainder set out upon the same course.

For a distance of two hundred yards the savages continued down the creek; then they led the way to the shore. Since it was expected a vigorous pursuit by the scouts would soon be instituted, the party was now hurriedly divided. A dozen dusky warriors, taking with

them the prisoners, set off through the darkest and most impenetrable portion of the wilderness, while the remainder, some twenty in number, remained, and scattered through the woods to cover the retreating party.

At first Edward had supposed they would be taken directly to the British camp, as prisoners of war ; but, as the minutes passed, and they were hurried along in an opposite direction, a fear soon began to force itself upon his mind that they were to be taken away, and made the victims of savage cruelty.

But there was no help for it. They were fast prisoners, and, unless by some lucky chance they could escape, must submit to their fate. In vain the young ranger tugged at the strong bands which bound his wrists. They were of raw deerskin, and all his strength was but wasted in the effort.

It was now quite dark, and, as they plunged at each step deeper into the forest shades, and further from friends, the chances decreased that any successful effort could be made to follow their trail. That Ben Williams would make an effort in their behalf was not doubted ; but would there remain the least prospect of success for the intrepid scout ?

Even while Edward's thoughts were busy in considering this point, the clear crack of a rifle, which he knew unmistakeably well, rung upon the forest, and a death-shriek from some savage throat almost immediately followed.

" Good ! good !" inadvertently exclaimed our hero ; " Ben is on our track ; we have something still to hope !" he would have added, but prudence restrained him.

In a moment, the utmost fear and panic seemed to seize upon the Indians. Grasping their captives more

firmly by their arms, they broke into a gait which might well have tasked a runner to keep pace with them. Meanwhile the rapid discharge of a dozen rifles and muskets followed, mixed with yells and execrations without number. In a short time, quiet seemed in a measure restored, though the result could only be surmised.

Hour after hour, did the weary party continue upon its way, winding hither and thither, until Edward was totally unable to determine their position. It was certain that they were not moving toward the British camp, since they already had passed several times the distance necessary to reach it. Their captors only spoke in monosyllabic ejaculations, and it was evident they, too, were in suspense. Oftentimes they paused, listening intently to the slightest passing sound, but nothing to disturb the silence broke upon their ears.

It must have been ten o'clock in the evening, when the loud, clear "hoot" of an *owl* broke upon the vast forest, waking the echoes, and bringing the moving party at once to a halt. Three several times the cry was repeated. and when the last sound died away, a deep grunt of satisfaction passed from lip to lip. For some minutes longer the party continued on their way, until, suddenly, a secluded hollow was entered, where an almost Stygian darkness reigned. At once, all came to a halt, and various signals passed. It was evident that other savages were there. Suddenly, a light flamed over the spot, illuminating the dense shrubbery until it looked like a fairy scene. The prisoners perceived that they were in a deep dell, for the forest trees were just perceptible in the darkness far above them. The fire lit was imbedded in the bank of the dell, and was so constructed as to be perfectly invisible, except to those immediately before it.

Edward perceived that the place already was occupied by other savages than had belonged to his party, and he observed, too, that one of them wore at his girdle a bloody scalp. The young ranger shuddered, and sickened at the fear which came over him. Was it the scalp of Ben or Luke? That it was one or the other he felt assured, since these were the remainder of the warriors who had formed the original band by which the prisoners were seized. Indeed, might not both of the scouts have fallen? How anxiously his eye wandered over the group, to see if he might discover another insignia of death. But, as some of the braves were lying prone upon the grass, beneath the bushes, as if exhausted with their hard march and flight, he could not see the dreaded sign of loss.

The savages proceeded, after lighting the fire, to cook a generous quantity of venison, with which the place seemed well supplied, as if it was a regular rendezvous; and, with true hospitality, the choicest bits were given to the women. Mark and Edward fared with the warriors, and all felt much restored by the needed food. The repast over, the chief proceeded to dispose all for the night. The prisoners were separated, and placed in comfortable positions for rest—a savage lying upon each side of the women. Mark and Edward, after being securely bound, hand and feet, were placed against the roots of separate trees, to which they were lashed, while over each a young brave was placed as a special guard. All thus being disposed, the fire was entirely deadened, and the stillness of profound rest soon brooded over the quiet spot.

Before the fire was extinguished, the young ranger had, with his vigilant eye, taken in the entire disposition—locating all the groups, the trees, the fire-place, &c. When all was wrapped in silence, and the dense darkness

shut out from view even his own sentinel, the young man did not sleep. His mind was keenly awake, and, as each moment added to the profundity of the sleep of his foes, it intensified his senses and his resolve to escape. Not that he had any idea of leaving his friends, but the desire within him was *to be free*—to be at liberty to act and plan, and follow his foes until circumstances should favour the rescue of those he loved. One—two—three—the hours passed, and he knew the moment had come to *try* for escape. Silently he tugged at his bonds—affecting sleep all the while, and snoring audibly. His guard sat a few feet away, as immobile as a basilisk. Was he awake or asleep? Edward could not tell, but tugged away at the green thongs with his teeth, and strained with his muscles, until the deer-leather had given or stretched so as to permit him to draw his woman's-shaped and pliable hand through the wrist-loop. It was then but the work of a moment to free his feet. Then came the critical moment, and his heart gave a great bound as his sentinel moved toward him, evidently having heard something to arouse his suspicions. The savage placed his hand upon the thong around the tree, and, finding it all right, gave a grunt of satisfaction, and retired again to his seat against a near tree. In less than five minutes he was snoring audibly! The tremendous exertions of the past two days had been too much for his powers of endurance, and he slept at his post—the deep sleep of physical exhaustion. Now, indeed, the prisoner's heart bounded, for his hour was come. Drawing from his bosom a long, keen blade, secreted in the lining of his under-shirt for just such emergencies, he severed the thong, arose to his feet, and moved away as silently as a shade. Striking the bank of the dell at once, he worked his way

up, and soon emerged into the forest above, where the darkness was so light as to render the trees easily discernible. Instinctively he struck off into the wilderness, to place a safe distance between himself and the sleeping camp. After a half mile's run, he paused, and then essayed to arrange his plans for action.

For many minutes he sat thus, undecided what course to pursue, when he was aroused by a footstep. Turning, he confronted the young savage whose guard he had eluded. To see one another was but the signal for a grapple, and they closed at once—the warrior evidently designing to recover his prisoner alive, and to return him again to his bonds. But the savage soon found his error, for the white was too supple and skilled in the rough-and-tumble tussle to be borne to the earth. Suddenly relaxing his hold, the warrior sought to bring his knife to bear, but it was too late, for the ranger cast him violently to the earth, and, whipping out his concealed knife, he gave his enemy the death-blow, but not before he had sent up his wild whoop of alarm. In a moment the answering yells from the camp and the woods around gave evidence that the savages were all on the alert. Hastily seizing the young brave's rifle, which he had dropped to the earth when he closed in with his escaped prisoner, Edward dashed away at a tremendous gait.

The foe, however, was close at hand. The young brave had aroused a few of his companions when the escape was discovered, and these were close upon the fugitive's track—so close as to render it impossible to elude recapture unless he could sacrifice them at once, ere they could direct those from the camp to the trail. The rifle in his hand doubtless was good for one shot, and that he prepared to make. Wheeling suddenly he brought the

sight to bear upon the nearest pursuer and fired. With a fearful shriek, the Indian rushed forward, shot through the breast, until he fell almost at the white man's feet.

Seizing his victim's rifle he again started on his rapid flight, but he had not proceeded a dozen rods when he came to the earth heavily—his foot having caught in a root or vine which darkness had covered from his sight. With a fierce yell of delight the three savages, still on his track, bounded forward, and, ere the young ranger could recover from his stunning fall, they had seized him. But he was not a passive prisoner. Drawing his faithful blade—which the savages did not suppose he possessed—he fought with such desperate energy as to mortally wound one of them and to injure the others ; but with no avail. The powerful warriors bore him to the earth by their mere weight, and he was a prisoner again, surrounded by a dozen savages, who now came pressing in from all sides. With wild shouts they bore him toward the camp—taking up on their way the bodies of the two slain braves, and supporting the wounded warrior.

Mark Winters, his wife, and Martha Billings, all turned their eyes anxiously toward the party as they drew near, hoping to gather from them that Edward had escaped. Deep was their grief to see the brave youth led into the midst of the exulting throng. The first general outcry had aroused them ; nor were they long in determining the cause. Joy for the escape of the youth mingled with fears for his safety. The length of time which elapsed gave strength to their hopes, and, notwithstanding the distant report of rifles, and yells of the savages, they had really looked to see the Indians return baffled and disappointed. With sinking hearts they saw the object of their anxiety again a prisoner, his garments

torn and saturated with blood. A quick cry escaped each of the women, but Mark was enabled to restrain his emotion in a great degree.

"Oh, Edward! my boy!" wildly exclaimed Mrs. Winters, "are you injured? Tell me, are you wounded?"

"Not a bit, mother!" he replied, cheerfully. "Only I led these red-skins a short race, and had a small set-to with some of them."

The savages did not seem disposed to allow the prisoners further speech, as he was at once led away, his limbs bound in the most unpleasant manner, and a strong guard set over him. The dead bodies of the four fallen savages were laid side by side, the survivors stretched themselves in careless indifference around, and silence once more fell upon the forest shades.

For the prisoners there was no more sleep. The stirring events of the night, the uncertainty of their situation, the terrible surroundings, all combined to drive sleep from their eyelids. During the long hours they lay in a sort of dreamy expectancy, waiting, longing for, and still fearing, the coming of the morning.

To Edward, especially, the hours dragged torturingly. Besides the uncomfortable manner in which he was bound, he had every reason to suppose that dire vengeance would be meted out to him so soon as the savages should reach their destination. However much they might admire his prowess, and regard his qualifications as a warrior, they would be very far from forgiving him for the braves who had fallen beneath his arm, or the ugly cuts inflicted upon the survivors. But, let come what would, he determined to meet his fate like a man, and even were he put to the torture, his tormentors should receive no gratification from his sufferings.

CHAPTER XIII.

PREPARATION AND FRUSTRATION.

At an early hour of the following morning, the savages arose, and gathered with curious countenances about the young scout. Each in his turn came near the man who had made such fearful havoc with their warriors, and then they passed on to the bloody corpses of their slain braves. Here they remained for some minutes, earnestly discussing some matter of evident importance. The conversation was carried on in low tones, yet the decided manner and earnest declamation of the speakers showed that strong interest was entertained in the result.

Whatever the subject might have been, there seemed a diversity of feeling, amounting almost to open antagonism in discussing it. The chief of the party at length seemed to take the power of arbitration to himself, and, leading the way to a secluded place at some little distance, the entire party, save those left on guard, were seated in a circle. Here the arguments were renewed, and it became quite apparent that Edward was the subject of them. The glances, full of hate and revenge, which were cast upon him, the frequent indications made toward the fallen braves, with the vehement ejaculations and savage demonstrations, plainly indicated this.

The young man was scarcely surprised at this, nor had he any doubt in regard to the intentions of his foes. Having found him too troublesome as a captive, they were determined to dispose of him; the only question was—how should it be done? Little as he relished the idea of an immediate death, especially at the hands of his cruel captors, he showed by no word or movement that he suspected the purpose of the council. For half an hour

did the council continue. At its close, the chief seemed to give a reluctant assent to the demand of his warriors. In a moment all was joy and exultation! The savages leaped and frisked about, brandishing their weapons and casting glances of defiance upon their victim. In a short time these demonstrations ceased, and the braves betook themselves to preparations.

A small stout sapling was first selected, around the base of which was collected a large quantity of dry sticks and limbs. This done the braves approached and stood in a sort of circle about the doomed prisoner.

"Young pale-face brave—very strong!" began the chief, stepping near; "fight very hard; kill many good warriors! Young braves feel sad—want scalp of young pale-face. Ta-ne-wah likes young pale-face warrior; would be his father. Young braves speak strong words; Ta-ne-wah must say, Burn young warrior!"

The chief bent a searching gaze upon his prisoner, but the young man's features gave no evidence of internal emotion. He returned the gaze with a calmness which astonished even himself.

Finding that he remained firm, the Indians broke forth into taunts and insults, but all to no purpose. The few words he deigned to bestow upon them were calm and passionless, though exciting the satanic malice of his tormentors more and more. From mere words they soon showered blows and hand-strokes without number upon him, pinching and pulling his hair, yet all to no purpose. Though he could feel no hope, and a speedy, cruel death stared him in the face, a mighty effort of his will enabled him to triumph. Silent and unmoved, he endured the scoffs and abuses of his foes, waiting in silence for the more fearful trial which was to come. Nor had he long to wait.

The demoniac propensities of the tormentors would not allow them long to forego the rich feast they had promised themselves, when their daring young enemy should be bound to the fatal tree, and the torch applied. Raising him in their arms, since they dared not again trust him even with the freedom of his feet, they bore him to the tree, where he was speedily bound, and the faggots fast piled about him. Meanwhile the vain efforts to move his calmness by taunts and abuses were continued. Hatchets were hurled at the sapling, rifles levelled, the motions of scalping repeatedly gone through with, but all in vain. The stern dignity of the young scout was not for a moment relaxed, and, at a signal from Ta-ne-wah, the torch was applied. In a moment the flames crackled and curled upward—the fearful work commenced, while the savages leaped and danced, with shouts and cries of fiendish joy!

The remaining prisoners had watched the preparations with appalled hearts. For some time they had been unable to comprehend the character of the proceedings. When at length the deadly purpose was surmised, pen can but feebly pourtray their anguish and misery. Mark, indeed, schooled himself to calmness, well knowing that all entreaties or protestations would be in vain. The women, on the contrary, could not repress their emotion, and prayers, tears, and supplications were poured forth, only to the delight of the cruel tormentors.

The flames, when once communicated to the dry faggots, spread rapidly around their outer circle, and soon the curling smoke enveloped the victim in its folds, hiding him from the vision of friends and foes alike. The flames had not yet reached his person, though the drifting sparks and hot breath which almost suffocated him were fast

becoming unendurable. Another minute and he should feel the hot tongues of flame lapping his shrinking flesh ! The undaunted young ranger turned his eyes in the direction of his friends, but could not see them. The hot smoke scorched his eyelids, adding to his torture, and blinding his vision completely.

But hark !

Breaking above even the yells and exultations of the savages came a long, loud "*hiss*," sharper than the deadly note of the serpent ! The bounding Indians paused, and gazed around bewildered. That slight pause in their rapid evolutions was the signal of death.

Crack ! crack ! crack ! flew from the sharp-toned rifles from above ! Three of the warriors fell dead, while a fourth staggered to the ground with an arm broken ! Before they could recover their equanimity, a second volley followed, and three more savages fell, to rise not again ! With a despairing cry, the survivors grasped their weapons.

"Come on, boys ! We have 'em. Give them smokin' brimstone !" roared a voice, which could have belonged to no other than Ben Williams.

With a wild yell, which might have struck terror to the heart even of savages, the borderers dashed down upon their surprised victims. Clubbing their heavy rifles and striking about them with the most determined energy, the surprise of the Indians soon became an entire defeat. Sustaining the unequal conflict until more than half their number had fallen, the survivors broke and ran with the utmost speed into the depths of the forest. Yet did they not escape ! Men as fleet of foot as they, and burning with a sense of wrong and outrage, were close upon them. Let them flee as they would, those stern avengers followed,

pausing not or sparing, until scarce a fugitive was left to tell the story of their fate.

But while the pursuit and slaughter had been thus unrelentingly maintained, the captives had not been left uncared for. Two strong men had dashed aside the blazing pile which flamed in such fearful proximity to our hero—his hands were cut, and he was carefully lifted from the fiery stake.

"Are ye burnt, stranger?" asked his liberators, as Edward once more stood upon his feet.

It was no easy matter for the youth to reply. Choked with smoke and ashes, and scorched as he had been, he still summoned the power to assure his rescuers that he was safe.

"Reckin if we'd been five or ten minutes later," continued the speaker, "ye'd a' got well smoked, eh stranger?"

"There is no doubt of that," the released and grateful man replied; "and you will accept my deepest thanks for the service you have thus rendered me."

"None o' that, stranger; not a bit on't!" was the hearty response. "We don't go into anythin' o' this kind for thanks; we dew it a-cause we've tuk a likin' tew ye, and hate red-skins—that's all."

The remainder of the prisoners were liberated by this time, and once more Edward was clasped in the arms of his overjoyed father and mother. Oh, the devout thankfulness of that moment, as those four persons again stood free and united beneath the pleasant, leafy canopy!

"I heard the voice of Ben, unless I much mistook," at length said Edward, turning to one of the scouts who stood near.

"Yas. Ben and Dave Sayles are both here, but ye

won't see 'em till they have skinned one or two o' the red niggers. They can't see anythin' else, so long as there's an Indian to be found. Besides, Ben's got somethin' new to pay 'em off fer now !"

"What is that?" queried the young man, looking at him anxiously.

"Ye see the reds killed Luke Samp's the other night, and very nigh fetched Ben himself, but he was too smart fer 'em; only he lost his gun, and got two or three whacks over the head. But that wouldn't hurt his pate any; ye see, his head is tougher'n a grizzly's."

"Then poor Luke is killed!" mused Edward. "The good, kind-hearted man! Alas, alas, that such is the fate of war! May he rest in peace!"

It was his scalp which the young ranger had seen dangling from the warrior's girdle.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOME AGAIN!

IN half an hour Ben Williams returned, and with him came Dave Sayles and half-a-dozen more of like character and habits. The former was the first to reach the young scout.

"Bless my old body!" he bellowed forth, seizing the hand of Edward between his own; "but I am most powerful glad tew see ye on yer pins ag'in. Tell ye what, youngster, I's afeard ye'd be done for fore we got to ye. But we's lucky dogs—well we be!"

"It was fortunate, indeed, for me, that you came as you did," returned the youth. "My position was far from being pleasant; though, thank fortune, I received no more than a trifling scorching!"

"Bravo boy! You're a trump!" vociferated Dave Sayles, as he pressed forward.

"I never see a feller o' your years what took a roastin' quite so cool. I knew ef ye war' a boy of John Sweet's 'at ye must be a gritty customer; but blame me ef I thought ye'd take it quite so unconcernedly!"

"That is my father!" remarked Edward, pointing to Mark Winters.

"That yer father? How in the great everlastin' perarer snakes d'ye make that out? Thought ye was Sweet's boy!" was the surprised exclamation.

Edward proceeded to explain his relation to Sweet, and the nature of that individual's dying confession.

"I never liked the appearance of Sweet," Sayles continued, "though he was a mighty good scout, and always to be depended on. But we needn't find fault now, my boy; he's gone to another world, whar' all accounts are regarded accordin' to law."

"Jest so, jest so," chimed in Ben, "an' if there were no better men gone this week, I'd be glad. Luke has gone, too, poor fellow! I did all I could, but I couldn't save the poor fellow's ha'r. Mine was all I could see too then, I reckon!"

"Were you ambushed?" asked Edward, anxious to learn the particulars of his friend's death.

"Not exactly; but about the same thing. Ye see, when we got across the brook, both on us suspected su'thin', an' Luke was sure he'd hearn su'thin' ahead. Howsumever, we didn't know for sure till we got to the creek, an' by the marks thereabouts we see'd what was up. In course we didn't stay long to consider, but started on in a hurry. Before we'd got fairly upon the trail, *swissle-to-swissle* came the infarnal bullets, an'

fust thin' Luke was killed! I wasn't hit a bit, and jest blazed away, droppin' one o' the critters fust pop. I treed, an' tried to load, but the reds come down so fast I got out o' that. They fired at me and hit my gun, spilim' that; so I got away the best I knew how. I wasn't long in scarin' up some fellers as was willin' to come; an' here we is, hungry as b'ars; so let's have some grub."

The half-burned brands and faggots, which had been intended for a far different purpose, were gathered together, and soon the roasting slices of the scouts were broiling over the fire.

"There," remarked Ben, as he passed a strip of the meat to Edward, "if the reds didn't roast you on this fire, we have roasted our breakfast; so it will not be made for nothin'!"

Hearty jests and laughs went around, notwithstanding the ghastly pile of corpses which had been gathered at a short distance. Simple, indeed, was the repast, consisting only of slices of venison, cooked over the extemporized fire. Still, all hands swallowed a liberal portion, and when the party was prepared for the homeward journey each set forth invigorated and determined.

To Martha Billings the experiences of the past few days had been of immeasurable importance. When first she learned the relation between him she called "father" and the brave young scout, she had felt pleased to be permitted to call the latter "brother." Now, she saw the hollowness of such a thought—realized that a deeper than sisterly affection pervaded her being. The realization that she loved the young hero brought with it many and varied emotions. Numerous and startling were the ques-

tions she asked herself, but not one of the host could she satisfactorily answer.

Did Edward regard her in any other manner than as a sister? If not, would he ever do so? This was the first and deepest thought, the one to which all others were but secondary. Hour after hour did she ponder the subject, and, as the march was conducted in silence, nothing disturbed the train of her meditations. Evening came, and still the mental debate continued.

About sunset a general halt was called, and, as the late captives could proceed but little further, it was determined to encamp in the vicinity for the night. That the light or smoke might not attract the attention of savages, should any be lurking in the vicinity, no fires were lighted—a draught of cold water and small supply of hard bread being the only food attainable.

Four men were appointed to keep watch during the hours of darkness, and the little band stretched themselves for repose. Such as had blankets pressed them upon the women, and thus quite a respectable couch was prepared, on which the two were soon sleeping, clasped in each others arms.

The hours passed, and morning stole upon the scene. All had remained quiet, there being no sign of Indians in the vicinity. The party were astir early, a rude breakfast was prepared, and in an hour they were upon the route toward Fort Meigs. Scouts were sent in advance, to guard against surprise, and others kept a considerable distance in the rear, to give intelligence of any possible pursuit.

Long and weary seemed the miles they travelled; but, as the sun was gradually declining in the west, the grim and frowning stockades dawned upon their expectant

eyes. Oh, how joyfully lifted the anxious, throbbing hearts of the worn sufferers, as those heavy walls burst upon their vision ! What a load of suspense and anxiety was withdrawn, when they were safely lodged within the strong enclosures, and kind-hearted friends pressed about to administer to their comfort.

Edward Winters was confined to his quarters for a day or two with an aching head and general indications of fever ; but his buoyant health and iron constitution prevailed. Soon he was well again, and anxious for deeds of daring. But there was no further occasion for the young scout to take the field. Before he fully recovered, the British were deserted by their Indian allies, and withdrew from the siege, leaving the garrison in undisputed possession.

Neither Mrs. Winters or the fair Martha were so fortunate as the vigorous young hero. For some days they were greatly indisposed. Only unremitting care and attention saved them from a long and severe illness.

Now that Edward Winters' services were no longer required against the enemy, he found his greatest pleasure in being near those from whom he had been so long separated. Hour after hour would he sit and relate for their gratification, scenes and incidents of border life and foray ; depicting the character and manners of those whom they would never again behold. Still, his greatest pleasure was when Martha formed one of the group, and a single glance from her lustrous eyes more than repaid him for all his efforts to interest them in his narrative.

But now that Mark Winters had found his son, and found him good and noble, his love of solitude diminished day by day, and ere long he formed the project of returning at once to his home in New England. As soon

as the health of the women would permit, they set out, and, though the journey was long, and weeks passed in the slow transit, they at length arrived in safety.

* * * * *

One year had passed since the return of Mark Winters and his family to their former home. The surprise of the inhabitants at the unexpected restoration of Edward was great, and he became a "lion" at once. Naturally reserved and modest, he shrunk from the many attentions pressed upon him, and found his happiest hours in the society of father and mother, or when beside her he had only learned to love the more deeply with the lapse of time.

Spring, with all its beauties, had come again. How pleasant to walk in freedom over the green fields—to listen to the rich songs of gladsome little songsters—to note the springing grass and unfolding flowers!

It was in such a walk as this, upon a more than usually delightful day, that our hero and heroine paused as they reached a cool and inviting grove. There was the rude bench, so temptingly placed beneath the shade of the largest trees, the soft murmur of waters running past, and the violets peeping from the grass at their feet.

"Come, Martha," said the youth, as he led the way toward the seat, "our walk has been long, we shall need to rest before returning. Let us sit here. I have something to tell you."

The maiden's heart told her very well the nature of the communication, else why the deep blush which mantled cheek and brow in a crimson glow? She walked at once to the bench, and, when seated, Edward sunk beside her, and poured forth his story of love and hope. With a wildly beating heart the fair one listened, and,

when the recital was ended, gently placed her palm within that of the youth. Did he wish for any more palpable answer?

An hour later they stood before Mark Winters.

"Father," said the young man, "to-day we have pledged ourselves to each other for life, and now we have come to ask your sanction and blessing!"

The father arose, and grasped an outstretched hand of each of the happy ones:—

"My children," he replied, calmly, "I am happy to give you both, not only my sanction and blessing, but my old age will be rendered happy by seeing you united. I feel no fears but that your future will be happy as well as prosperous. Be to each other what you have been to me, and all the trials and sorrows of life will pass unheeded!"

A few months later, and the splendid mansion of Judge Hinton, the father of Agnes Winters, was filled with a merry and festive throng. The Judge was now an old man, whose whitened locks and feeble step proclaimed him almost ready for the grave. But he had not forgotten the pleasant, black-eyed little grandson, whom he had fondled many years before. Now that the child had risen to the estate of man, and was about to enter upon the responsibilities of married life, the kind old grandfather had asked that the ceremony might be performed beneath his own roof, where his fond hands could superintend the arrangement.

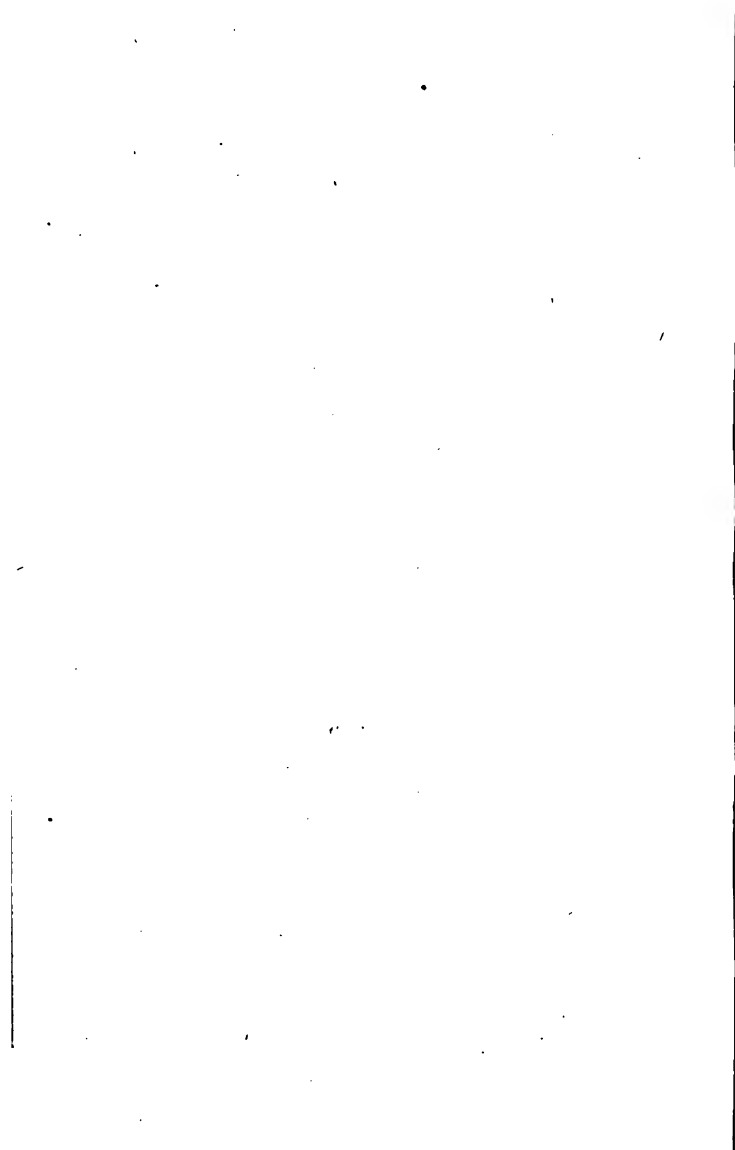
Many strange faces were gathered beneath the hospitable roof of the old Judge upon that evening, but a common sympathy dwelt in every bosom.

Suddenly the murmur of voices was hushed, and a general feeling drew each toward the scene. The happy

couple, so soon to be made one, had entered, and even now stood before the venerable, white-haired man of God. Gently the words dropped from his lips—those words which are fraught with such deep and holy import. The responses were given, the vows uttered, and Edward and Martha were man and wife !

The love which had kindled 'mid peril and danger at the humble cabin in the Far West, had, at length, reached its happy fruition.

THE END.





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THE SECRET SHOT;

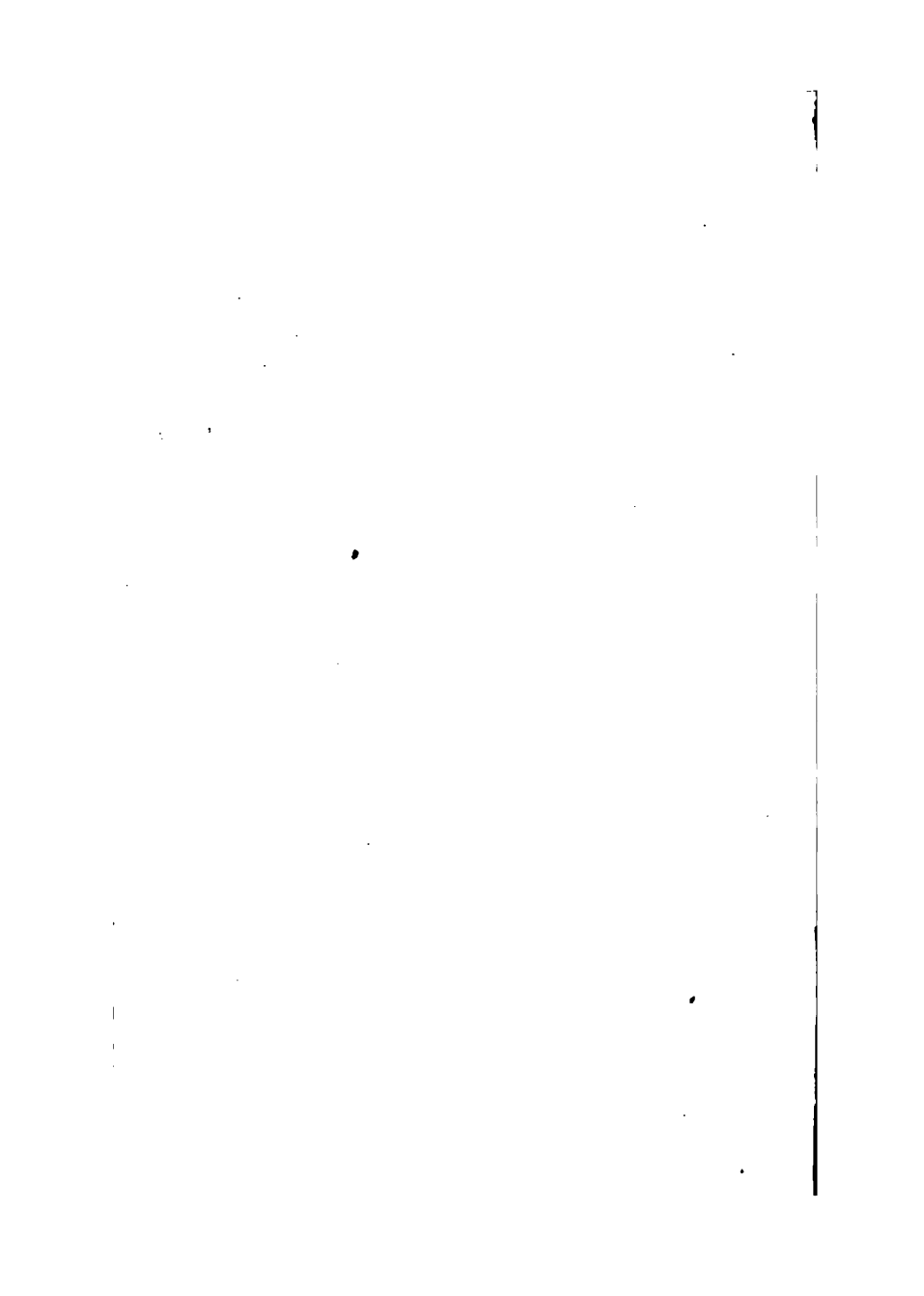
OR,

THE RIVALS OF MISTY MOUNT.

By HERRICK JOHNSTONE.

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1866.




THE SECRET SHOT.

CHAPTER I.

MISTY MOUNT AND ITS PEOPLE.

IF any one will take the trouble to inspect a good topographical map of the American Republic, he can hardly fail to be struck with the wonderfully mountainous nature of the western region of North Carolina. That portion of Tennessee immediately adjoining is also of an elevated, broken character; but the Act of Congress which struck the line of separation along the cloud-draped battlements and sturdy bastions of the Alleghanies (which is the general term for the entire upheaval), threw by far the loftiest and most intricate spurs within the dominion of the Old North State. Indeed, they throng down from the north, through the Quaker State and the Old Dominion, in grim and irregular array, like invading Titans; but it is only upon their arrival in this secluded portion of the Old North State, that their winding chains becomes labyrinths—that their awful sublimity springs into the utterly stupendous. It seems as if there the very heart of the boiling volcanic era must have been suddenly petrified into immutable granite. Ranges unroll themselves in the wildest confusion; spur starts from spur with frightful vehemence; the black frosts of the Bald Mountains confront the greyer giants of the cloud-capped Smoky Range with terrible determination written on their stormy foreheads; and there are lower peaks piled in behind them which no mortal eye has seen; there



are numerous glens and défiles where the deer still sports in pristine freedom, and where the foot of mortal being—red or white—has never trod. But still, the sinuous, adventurous course of civilization has crept somewhat among the outer defiles; and the smoke of the lumberman's cabin or the tar-gatherer's hut may occasionally be seen where, but a few years ago, a "monstrous loneliness possessed the wild."

But what must have been the savage grandeur of this inhospitable region eighty or ninety years ago!

Tennessee itself was almost unknown. Vast mountain ridges which have now distinct appellations were nameless then, or only mentioned in the friendly Indian's legend, when he reposed by the settler's fireplace, down in the more level lands. The distant and loftier ranges were regarded as an impenetrable barrier. Nevertheless, at and before the Revolution, many a bold pioneer had hewn a home for himself and family among the fertile valleys of the eastern spurs, and, in a few instances, settlements of considerable size had arisen at their rocky feet.

Among the more remarkable and successful of these attempts to "soften the savage Mother into smiles," was that made by an American gentleman, named Godfrey Gwin, so early as 1756. Of excellent lineage—being the son of an English baronet of affluence and power, though American born—this gentleman had entered the business of life under flattering auspices. He was the lord of an extensive plantation in the most fertile district of the coast, with numerous slaves, and a vast and growing income. But sorrow came upon his house. He had not married early; and when life was mellowing into the riper age which needs the sustaining prop of sympathy and love far more than wealth and power, the Destroyer

touched his prosperous household, and plucked the fullest, fairest of its blooms. The wife of Godfrey's bosom, and his eldest son—the prop and pride of his declining years—were gathered to the tomb in one fell night. He had lost other children before this; and now but two were left him—a son and daughter of tender years. So great was his grief at this double loss, that an incurable melancholy fell upon the unhappy man, until at length, unable longer to endure the familiar scenes which constantly recalled to his burdened mind the memory of the dear departed, he formed the Quixotic design of disposing of his magnificent patrimony, and seeking a new and more rugged home among the wild mountains to the westward. His friends, considering this decision as the undeliberated impulse of a nature grown morbid with grief, endeavoured to persuade its abandonment; but their efforts were vain. With trappers and remote settlers for his guides, he set forth, and spent considerable time in search of a location to his fancy. This he at length hit upon. Far to the west, among the lesser ranges of the Atlantic slope, he discovered a valley of remarkable fertility, well watered by the head-waters of the Catawba, and some of it naturally free of timber; the whole overbrowed by a lofty peak from the west, which went by the name of Misty Mountain, or an Indian term with that signification. Lesser chains of irregular height almost completely encircled the chosen valley on every side. The grief-stricken man seemed to find a moody kind of consolation in this romantic spot; and made every preparation for a speedy change of his abode.

His large estate was soon disposed of, and, in a few months, the child of luxury and refinement could have been seen among the mountains, tanned and hardened by

healthful exposure, assiduously directing the labours of his slaves, in rearing fences and outhouses for his flocks and herds, and in breaking the rich but difficult glebe of the valley, while artisans from the northern cities were busy at work on a chosen site with the rough granite of the hills, which, he had determined, should compose the structure of a mansion-house worthy of those who should come after him. Scarcely a year was required to complete the improvements. The staunch grey mansion rose like a castle from its eminence, with the placid Catawba rolling at its feet; corn and tobacco fields grew luxuriantly on either bank; the excellent pasture of the verdant slopes afforded ample nourishment to increasing flocks and herds; the Indian tribes in the immediate vicinage were won to the white man's will by kindness; and the sun of prosperity grew brighter every day around the smiling acres of Misty Mount, as the manor came to be called. Moreover, many of the owner's friends, who had at first endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, were now tempted, likewise, to seek a similar home. A dozen years or so saw additions to the settlement, in the shape of contiguous plantations and mansions, of more or less affluence, while a little town sprang up on the banks of the river, a few miles from Misty Mount, not far from the site of the present town of Morgantown. This settlement, which we will call Valleyton, grew into a considerable village at the outbreak of the then impending conflict.

Among those wealthy settlers who helped to cultivate the fertile valley where Godfrey Gwin had vainly sought seclusion, was a family of some distinction from tidewater Virginia, by the name of Gleason. The head of this family was an Englishman by birth, and of the most

ultra illiberal opinions. In various colonies he had held posts of considerable importance (by Royal appointment, of course), and, in most cases, had made himself thoroughly detested by his servile obedience to the unjust edicts of the King, and his arrogant contempt for the colonists over whom he exercised his petty power. Although a semblance of fraternity existed between the two families, the liberal American views of Gwin would often clash against the stern loyalty of the Briton, in a manner which threatened future peace. For discontent was already muttering through the colonies; eyebrows were knitting angrily, hands unconsciously clenched, and there were wide indications of the distant but certain storm.

However, there still were fair years of cloudless peace. Godfrey went on improving his estate, and, as he did so, he grew old. But a noble scion at his side, his only son, arose into promising manhood; and a lovely flower at his side, his only daughter, Ida, dreamed up into wondrous beauty and fragrance.

At the outbreak of the war for our independence, the old man had espoused the cause of the Patriots with all the energy of his enthusiastic nature. Too old to fight, he was lavish of his great wealth in support of our armies. Walter, the son, had grasped his blade at the first clash of arms, and hurried to the conflict at the head of a company of horsemen, which he quickly organized from among the young men of the valley. But there were not a few in the South who took an entirely different view of the subject. These were the Tories. The obloquy which has fallen on many of them was unmerited; as they, for the most part, were thoroughly conscientious in their opinions, and in their support of the King, whom they honestly believed to be possessed

ginia before reinforcements could reach him from the north. At this momentous time, when the dwellers of Valleyton and vicinity were full of anxiety at the rumoured approach of the invader, we take up the thread of our story.

CHAPTER II.

PORTRAITS, AND A DEED OF DARKNESS.

- Vice slipped from his tongue : Oh treachery !
The assassin spoke out from his laugh ; hissed through
His make-believe ; and coiled like an adder
In his too sunny smile.

It was in the golden depths of autumn. The trees were turning into tenderer hues of yellow, saffron, and ardent red ; the golden grain was gathered and stored ; hour by hour the mountains looked more hazy and sombre as the cooler breezes took their wooded summits from the North ; and Catawba river loitered like a shining dream through the still brighter verdure of the valley below. The sun was about setting through a glory of gold and purple, when a group of several persons might have been observed seated on the broad, southerly-facing porch of Misty Mount Manor, with their eyes bent upon the lovely and placid scene that lay below them.

The most prominent of these was the owner of the estate, Godfrey Gwin, whose benevolent face was somewhat the rosier from the excitement of the moment. His few white hairs were flowing in the fresh gale. Seated at his left side, with her little hand caressingly placed upon his knee, was a maiden whose beauty would have startled the hardest anchorite from his bended knees. About the medium height, her figure seemed absolutely perfect. The plump robustness of the bare and snow-

white arms, so daintily tapering to the delicate hands; the full contour of the bust; the well-developed symmetry of the firm shoulders; and the strong but slender neck, gave tokens of that blending of strength and beauty which now is so seldom met with among American women. Such beauty the old Greek poets and sculptors successfully embodied in the conception of their huntress-goddess, "fleet-footed Diana." The face was very fair, a perfect oval, and a crystal skin. Her eyes were as blue as a mid-sea billow with the sunlight flashing through it; her hair profuse and golden, with a burnished ripple chasing it over the temple's arch. It is hardly necessary to say that this was Ida of Misty Mount. A young man of thirty or thereabouts sat on the opposite side of the table from the old gentleman. This was Captain Walter Gwin, at home on sick leave. He, evidently, was convalescent, though his fine face still was somewhat pale, and he wore a light bandage around his left hand. Near him, but standing on the ground, with his elbow leaning upon the floor of the porch, was the pensive figure of a muscular Indian, half clad in leggings and blanket, but his broad, dark chest, and right arm free. Two or three black children were romping on the lawn immediately in front. The entire group was eminently picturesque and delightful.

At length the old man broke the silence.

"What sorrow has fallen like a dark mantle upon the free spirit of the Thunder-Mocker?" he said, turning kindly to the pensive savage, and imitating, as was his habit, the poetic phraseology of the red man.

There was something dark in the severe eye of the savage as he lifted it to the questioner's face.

"The soul of Wandalo is indeed dark," he replied,

"but it is not at the thunder which the Great Spirit flings around his throne. Such never harmed Wandalo. It is the thunder of the white man that has brought this gloom upon his spirit. He had four brave sons. They were as the mountain pines that lift their heads to heaven. What are they now? They are as the mountain pines that lay uprooted in the black ravine, with the hurricane souging through their withered branches. It was the white man's thunder did this. The soul of Wandalo is bright no more."

"The four brave sons of Wandalo had no business to fight for the Red-coats then," said the younger Gwin, with the pettish thoughtlessness of a sick man.

The savage started back and glared at him with ferocious anger written in every line of his dark face.

"Tush, tush, Walter! you are thoughtless," whispered his father, reprovingly. "Wandalo must not heed a sick man's idle words," he soothingly added, turning to the savage. "I am sure I, for one, can sympathize, and deeply, in the chieftain's sorrow, almost as much as if his children had perished beneath the Continental colours instead of under the invader's banner.

"And I too, Wandalo," murmured the sweet voice of Ida. The angry lines of the dusky face partially relaxed as her tender eyes rested upon it.

"The words of the good white man are gentle," he said, still with some gloom in his tone, "and the tenderness of the white Wild-Flower of the Misty Mountain descends like the dew of the morning on the suffering heart. Wandalo forgets not old friendship! He forgets not the little maid that played like a sunbeam on the green slopes, in the olden time."

The attention of the party was arrested by the appear-

ance of a horseman, approaching the mansion by the road from the east. He presently came up. He was a young American officer of rank, apparently, with much quiet dignity in his mien.

"Pardon the intrusion," he said, without alighting; "but I am very thirsty. Will you oblige me with a glass of water?"

"Certainly, my dear fellow!" said old Godfrey, in his hearty tone, at the same time pouring out a glass and reaching it to him from the porch. "And I have excellent brandy and a dozen kinds of wine at your service, if you will alight and join us, sir," he continued.

"Thank you, but I cannot alight; I must hasten to the village, where I am waited for," said the stranger. "I will willingly join you in a friendly glass, however."

The wine was ordered and the glasses filled—not forgetting one for the silent Indian.

The horseman raised his brimming glass and bent his dark eyes upon the beautiful girl.

"If no lady was present," said he, "I should propose the health of one whom I have never seen, but whose beauty as the Heiress of Misty Mount has reached my ears in a distant home; but as I can conceive of no superior loveliness to what I behold in the lady before me, I propose—"

"The gentleman is complimentary," blushing interposed the lady. "And, although I ignore the fame which his gallantry mentions, I think he can consistently propose the toast which he previously contemplated."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the other. "Do I then address—"

"No particular heiress, sir, but plain Ida Gwin at your service," continued the lady, with another blush.

"Now then, indeed," cried the stranger, uncovering, "do I propose, and gratefully, the Heiress of Misty Mount!" and the toast was quaffed by all, with the exception of its lovely subject.

"And will the gentleman honour us with his own name?" said the courtly host.

"Little honour will be conferred, I am afraid," replied the stranger, with a smile. "His name is Henry Cleaveland, a poor colonel in the Continental army, at your service, with no possession in the world but a respectable record and the sword at his side."

"A brave man needs no more to recommend him," said Walter Gwin; "and if you are the same who participated at Monmouth—"

The colonel lifted his hat once more, and bowed, while the young man started forward and impulsively seized his hand.

"You are he, then?" he joyfully exclaimed. "Such a sword as yours is possession enough—it is an estate—a field of honour!"

The father and daughter were also glad to shake hands with a man of Cleaveland's fame, and the latter felt so comfortable that he was already regretting the duties which must render his halt of short duration.

"Now, let *me* propose a toast," cried old Godfrey, brimming the glasses again as he spoke. "Here is to George Washington and the Continental armies, and confusion to their foes, be they British or Tories."

"With all my heart!" cried the horseman, emptying his glass with gusto, as did Ida and her brother.

But a sudden shade of anger darted over the pale cheek of the latter.

"Our toast is distasteful to Wandalo, it seems. Why

does the chieftain spill his wine upon the grass?" he exclaimed, looking angrily and distrustfully at the savage, who, at the mention of the last toast, had scornfully flung his wine away.

"The wine is too red for Wandalo," was the scornful reply. "The life-blood of his children is dark in the cup. The Thunder-Scorner cannot drink to the destroyers of his race."

The fierce fit was upon him again. Seizing his rifle, he drew his blanket closer around him, and strode away.

"He speaks excellent English for a savage," observed Cleaveland. "Is he trustworthy?"

"Father thinks so," said the young captain, dubiously.

"I consider Wandalo perfectly trustworthy," said Mr. Gwin. "I have known him now for twenty years. His tribe and he occupied the plains and ranges immediately behind Misty Mountain, when I first settled here; and, although the rest of his tribe have long since gone further west, Wandalo haunts the old scenes like a phantom of loneliness. Mutual favours have passed between us frequently. He saved my life once at the upper cataract of the Catawba, and, most probably, the old friendship is his strongest motive for lingering about the valley. He has never served the Tories, though all his kindred have perished in their cause; on the contrary, he has rendered signal service to General Morgan in the skirmish of last spring, at the middle ford of Broad river. What you have just witnessed was merely a momentary fit of gloom at the recollection of his slaughtered sons."

"I am afraid it means more than that," said Walter.

"Pardon me if I venture to agree with your son," said Cleaveland, turning to Mr. Gwin. "I have been much with the Indians, and do not speak in ignorance of their

character when I say that vengeance is their ruling passion, before which all others, good or evil, sink into insignificance. The savage casts aside all friendships in the heat of his vendetta, as the serpent casts his skin. His monomania is revenge. I should be guarded and watchful of this Wandalo. He may be dangerous and false as—"

"As a Tory," interrupted Walter, laughing.

"That will do," said the colonel, with a smile. "And now, in return for my diagnosis of the red-skin, what do you make of the *genus* Tory, captain?"

"Well, let me see. Really—it is a beast of the masculine gender exclusively—spiteful in the extreme—vicious—dangerous—there! I give up the subject, as beyond my comprehension."

"Perhaps Colonel Cleaveland can give a better definition," suggested Ida, much amused at her brother's failure.

"I should say," was the reply, "that a Tory is one who has his head in England and his body in America, and should, therefore, have his neck stretched. Good-bye!" And, wheeling his steed abruptly, he spurred away in the midst of the general laugh at his blunt definition.

"Come again," cried old Godfrey, after the retreating horseman, and Ida could not forbear waving her handkerchief.

The officer turned, took off his hat, bowed thankfully, and continued his course. They watched him galloping down the long road till he was lost in the distance.

"A handsome fellow," observed the old gentleman.

"So say I," said Walter. "What think you, Ida? Bless me, how you are blushing."

The lady turned away her head, for she felt the warm blood tinging her cheek.

"Don't be ashamed, my little heiress," continued her brother, merrily. "The subject of your thoughts is well worthy—"

"What do you know of the subject of my thoughts, you saucy fellow?" retorted his sister, with a playfully offended air. "I would also have you know, sir, that I am *not* an heiress, as if the whole of Misty Mount were one day to be mine, when papa is so hale and strong, and when a great fellow like you is to come in for the lion's share."

"Don't be alarmed, pet," said her brother, laughing. "I may not be in the way so long as you think. A soldier's lease of life is an uncertain one."

These words had barely left the young man's lips when the sharp though distant report of a rifle was heard. The captain sprang from his seat very quickly, but immediately sunk down on the floor of the porch.

"What is the matter, man?" exclaimed the old man, in amaze.

There was no answer but a groan.

"My God!" gasped Ida, "he is wounded—Walter is wounded!"

She threw herself on her knees at his side, in an agony of grief; while, for a brief instant, the old man did not move. The whole thing had happened so quickly, suddenly, that his mind was momentarily paralyzed. But the next instant he was kneeling by his prostrate son.

"Walter, Walter! It cannot be! Look up, my boy, look up to your father!"

The young man opened his eyes languidly. A faint smile brightened over his lips for a second or two; then his head sunk back, his eyes closed again, his jaw fell—and Ida Gwin was indeed an heiress—the sole heiress of

the princely mansion and the broad, rich acres of Misty Mount. The dead man's hand, which had been nervously pressed to his heart, slipped loosely away as the head dropped back, and his white shirt and vest immediately began to crimson with the oozing blood beneath. The old man tore the bosom bare, and there was the wound—the little, round, deadly hole of the rifle-bullet, straight through the centre of the now motionless heart.

It would be idle to attempt to portray, in fitting language, the anguish that fell upon the household at this sudden and terrible stroke. Therefore, let us draw the veil over their sacred grief.

The news of this cowardly murder spread consternation and sorrow through the entire valley, for the victim was universally beloved. No effort was spared to bring the unknown assassin to justice; but without avail. The doer of the deed was not found. Not even the smoke of the deadly rifle had been seen. Only its distant report had been heard—from what direction none could remember. And the mourning relatives and their friends were left in a cloud of doubt as well as misery. All the slaves of the estate were closely examined, without eliciting anything of importance; and the shrewdness of the old chieftain, Wandalo, was brought into requisition, with no better success. He searched all the adjoining thickets thoroughly, and finally gave it up as a hopeless quest.

CHAPTER III.

NEW ACTORS ON THE SCENE.

GATEKEEPER.—See, fellow, my lord knits his brows; and now he chuckles like a cackling hen. Depend on't, that mother wit of his has laid another egg.

BUTLER.—Ay, and there'll be deviltry hatching soon.

OLD PLAY.

ON that same dark day, as the twilight deepened over the valley, a solitary figure was standing motionless within a little arbour which stood on the lawn, in front of old Jacob Gleason's dwelling, scarcely a mile from Misty Mount. It was the bent figure of a gloomy old man. He seemed to be lost in thought as he gazed out of the arbour toward the mansion. His reflections must have been anything but pleasant. The house was large and of some elegance of style, but sadly out of repair. Indeed, everything about the place gave token of stinginess or poverty in the possessor. The wooden portico in front was much decayed; some of the upper windows were broken; and the once trim garden was sadly overgrown with weeds. But it was not poverty that kept the place in such dismal condition.

A light step on the lawn aroused him, and he looked up expectantly. It was only, however, the form of his mulatto housekeeper who approached, and he was disappointed.

"What do you want, Judith?" he inquired, pettishly.

"My master," was the reply.

There was something remarkable in the appearance of this slave-woman. Her complexion was very light—almost white—and her features had some remnants of beauty in their passionate lines. She was not young—forty or thereabouts—but her long, straight hair was of raven blackness; her large, dark eyes were intensely

bright—almost feverishly so. The air of this woman was not that of a slave—hardly that of a servant.

"What do you want?" again asked the master.

"I bear news," said the slave-woman. "Walter Gwin was shot to death an hour ago by a concealed assassin."

"Shot? and killed? Who could have done the horrid deed?"

"Ay, who *could* have done it?" The woman stood before him with folded arms, eyeing the old man with a kind of ferocity which expressed mingled pleasure and consciousness of the possession of a secret.

"What do you mean?" instinctively asked the now trembling master.

"I mean that what you have wished for is accomplished—that no second heir to the manor now stands in the way of your schemes!" This was uttered in a tone of defiance and contempt, which, had Jacob Gleason been a guiltless man, would have caused him to strike the presumptuous slave to the earth. As it was, he could only utter a protest against the mulatto's assumption.

"Judith!"

The slave smiled in her consciousness of power, and gazed upon him with her great passionate eyes, as if the moment were one of triumph. "Which one is the slave?" seemed to be the words ready formed upon her tongue.

Approaching footsteps put a stop to further recrimination.

"Is that the Indian's tread?" asked Gleason, bending his ear to listen.

"No; the footstep of the Indian is noiseless by night. This is a step of a moody man."

"Whose?"

"Your son's!"

As she spoke, the tall form of Heartstead Gleason stood in the door of the harbour. He was haggard and travel-worn, and looked like a haunted man. Without saying a word, but throwing a scowl at Judith, he took the old man by the arm, and proceeded up the lawn to the house.

Judith was left alone. She watched the departing twain through the gathering gloom, and then came out of the harbour, and sat down on a little bench outside. There she remained a long time. The night grew pitchy dark without her noticing it; then the rising moon glimmered like an uplifted shield above the tree-tops, and the balmy lustre played about her face, but she did not observe its beauty. At length a leaf rustled behind her, and she started. The dusky form of Wandalo glided into the moonlight. His eyes rested upon her with sorrowful tenderness.

"Why does the wild Passion-Flower droop?" said Wandalo. "Are the dews of memory heavy on her soul?"

The woman's mood was one on which the sad tones of the savage fell soothingly.

"Yes, my friend," she replied; "but I am always thus. And how is it with the Thunder-Mocker. He is also pensive. He lingers about the mountain which his tribe have deserted, like a lonely waterfall whose sister torrents have ceased to flow."

"Yes," was the mournful reply. "The white man's foot may invade the old dingles, and the red men may drift to the westward like the waving fogs in the morning sun, but Wandalo still roams like a dream the old hunting-grounds. And his spirit shall linger here also.

While the eagles shriek and soar above the cliffs—while the deer and the bear and the wolf are abroad, and while the Catawba flows to the sea, the soul of Wandalo shall cling to his Misty Mountain.”

He relapsed into silence, and, sitting down by her side, took her hand in his, without resistance, for Wandalo and Judith were old friends.

It is difficult to imagine a genuine love as existing in the breast of a male aborigine, his habits are so rude—his nature is so fierce. But if ever man loved woman fervently, devotedly, this lonely Indian, Wandalo, loved the slave-woman, Judith. He had a proud, high tone of feeling in his rude breast, and he knew the woman perfectly for what she was—a slave. Still he would have made her his bride with utter rapture; he would have borne her to his lonely cabin on the mountain, and made her his queen, his idol. Wandalo was a young brave, full of the ardour and vigour of the savage when the blood is fresh in the veins, at the time when Jacob Gleason came to the neighbourhood of the mountain from the coast, bringing with him, among other slaves, the beautiful mulatto, who was then in the ripe, voluptuous splendour of tropic womanhood. There were dark threads in the rumour of her history. That which gained the most credence was that she was natural sister of Godfrey Gwin, the wealthy possessor of Misty Mount. Judith's mother, Elise, a slave-woman of much beauty and some accomplishments, had belonged to Sir Henry Gwin, the father of old Godfrey, many years before the opening of our story. Elise was wedded to a slave, also a mulatto, a house-servant at the mansion, but suffered such persecution at the hands of her mistress, the Baronet's wife, that she became partially

deranged. The birth of Judith, and the child's exceeding beauty, only added to the poor mother's calamities. One morning early she was discovered dead in her bed, having taken poison. Judith grew up, as tenderly cared for as it was possible by Sir Henry, but hated by the mistress, for the child was a pure quadroon in complexion, and intelligent as the most favoured child of Saxon blood. The kindness of Sir Henry toward her seemed to confirm the generally received opinion of his close relationship, and she passed for one of his own blood. That the Baronet's other children imbibed much of their mother's hate toward the quadroon was but natural, and the boys, Rupert and Godfrey, were not calculated to brook her presence when it could be dispensed with. The opportunity of placing her where, in a slave community, such are ever legally placed—in a slave's position and estate—was not wanting, for, upon Sir Henry's death, Judith fell by law among the "assets" of his estate, and was disposed of as one of his horses would have been. Her purchaser was Jacob Gleason. That this man had a design in her purchase will appear in the course of the narrative.

Judith had in her nature all the elements of happiness. She was very beautiful, very gleesome, very willing to love and be loved; but all this power to be happy was thrust back upon her heart like a threat, and when she was converted into a slave in fact, by executor's sale, her passionate soul lost its love, its purity, its hopes, and she became changed to a creature whose ceaseless cry was for vengeance, not only against those who had abased her, but against society itself, which looked on and endorsed the hideous wrongs heaped upon her existence. From her heart went forth all pity, all goodness, as sombre mourners

from a house of death ; in their stead came the passions and hates which render human nature fearful in its worst manifestations.

As the property of Gleason, the beautiful girl was received in his family with the distrust and jealousy which Southern women always bestow upon household slaves of more than ordinary attractions. But she bore ill-usage patiently, although her fierce nature prompted her many a time to retaliation which would have ended in tragedy. Her heart was set upon vengeance ; to attain her wish she could bear all things—ill-usage, slander, suffering of body and spirit. Vengeance against the house which had destroyed her happiness, her faith in Heaven, her hopes of future life ! Poor girl. She did not know that her purchaser read her vows in her very eyes—that he had penetrated the disguise in which she had clothed her secret purpose. He knew her well, and he had purchased her to let her work out that purpose, since it harmonized well with the designs which long had been forming in his own brain toward the Gwin family and property.

All the years of her girlhood were spent in the slave's estate, and yet the fortunate moment for inflicting humiliation, for bringing sorrow into the Gwin household, did not arrive.

Mulattoes at that time were not frequently met with, at least in the colonies of North America. The institution of African slavery was then too young to have produced, in any considerable numbers, those living evidences of one of its principal and intrinsic evils. But, as now, the mulatto women were sometimes of rare beauty ; and, owing to the paucity of the class, they were the more noticeable.

Her chattel-hood was comparatively easy. Stricken

with remorse, her father and master hardly treated her as a servant. He silently endured the reproach of her existence. She was brought up with his children, ate with them, lived with them, was educated with them. But these children, Rupert and Godfrey, shrunk from their little slave-sister as a disgrace to their dead mother's memory, although there was some pity in Godfrey's heart. As for the unfortunate girl, her springing form unfolded with all the beauty of her mother. Passionate, fierce, vindictive, terrible, yet full of self-control, patient, vigilant, subtle-brained, this being, as she developed into the first blush of glorious womanhood, resembled, in a moral sense, a beautiful leopard: her footstep was as flowing, as velvety; her customary mien was as glossy and as sleek; her heart was as loving and as treacherous—one to be tamed, perhaps, but never trusted. Within the bosom of such a being how must have rankled the dark story of her mother's misery and her own wrongs! It could not be concealed from her. She gathered the narrative while yet a child; and a carefully-nursed vengeance expanded in her bosom in pace with its budding charms. At the age of eighteen, the slave-girl was a wonderful creature. Her charms were brilliant, but not tender; they were rather the dark, voluptuous belongings of the fallen angel. She was well read, well educated. The guitar was a tuneful slave to her passionate hand; she could sweep the harp like a sybil of old; and her voice was the mistress of song. About this time her master and father died—suddenly and unprepared. Immediately there was a change in her estate. From the wilful mistress of the household, by the force of law she fell to the condition of the slave. The brothers would brook her at their side no longer. And

the oldest, Rupert, persecuted her as his father had persecuted her mother. But in this case the fall was not that of the stricken deer, but the wounded tiger. A week later and her persecutor was sent to another world through the medium of poison. Godfrey also fell ill, but was restored in time. Horror possessed the unhappy household. The body of the old man was unearthed ; and it was found that he also had perished by poison. The slave-girl was suspected and arrested ; but nothing could be proved, and the law relinquished its hesitating grasp. And about this time a gloomy man became spell-bound by the beauty of Judith, during a journey from his Virginia home. She easily induced him to buy her—Godfrey being only too glad to be rid of her presence. Something of the latter's subsequent history we already know, as the acquirer and present possessor of Misty Mount. The new owner of Judith was Jacob Gleason. He was wealthy, and hated the race of Gwin with a secret and serpent-like malignity ; and this was enough for Judith, who might use him for the tool of her vengeance. But he was first to be made a perfect tool : and he had a family—a wife and two young sons, and a maiden sister. The wicked Gleason had long grown cold to the former, who was wealthy in her own right, as was the sister also. And these women were not long in crossing the path of Judith. The wife of Gleason was a proud English dame, who conceived an instant hatred for the new slave, whose miraculous beauty inflamed her jealousy to a white heat.

Gleason had no peace for the recrimination which followed, and Judith was unmercifully persecuted. The latter bore it meekly for a while. But one day, the master being from home, the beautiful slave was seized by the order of her mistress, and firmly bound in a deep,

dungeon-like cellar beneath the house. Here, alone, with a torch in one hand and a many-thonged whip in the other, the lady, insane through jealousy, inflicted a terrible punishment upon the person of the slave. The lash was applied till the wearied hand of the torturer could lift it no longer; and then the red tongue of the torch was applied, with the skill of a fiend's malignity, so as not to mar so much as to scorch, till malice itself was sated, and the cup of vengeance dry to the dregs. But there was no need to have confined the victim in a shriek-stifling dungeon to accomplish this; the partition that separated her from the listening world might have been of pasteboard for aught that the world would have known of the deed enacting within. For not a sound, not a murmur, escaped the suffering victim on that rack of pain. She set her lips, without a tear. At length, the tormentress, fearing her husband's return, released and revived her victim. To her astonishment, the heroic Judith did not rush to her master and display her scars to excite his pity and fury. She moved about the house as before, without a murmur, almost without a twinge of the lip. "No matter," thought the baffled tormentress, with an inward smile, "I can wait till another time. I can flog her to the quick, if I bide my time." But human calculations are never certain. That evening the lady fell sick. And Judith waited upon and nursed her mistress, in spite of the protestations of the latter, with an assiduity which was positively filial. Slowly the patient grew worse. Her case was beyond the doctor's comprehension. Her teeth were gradually loosened; her hair fell out; her skin shrunk to parchment; and, after many days of indescribable anguish, she died. Scarcely a year elapsed before the maiden sister of Gleason was seized

with the same horrible disease, but in a swifter form. She also perished; and Judith had the actual, as she had long had the virtual, control of Jacob Gleason's household. The latter—his fortunes well-nigh trebled by these sudden deaths—had, shortly after, emigrated to the vicinity of Misty Mount, where we now find him. The tribe to which Wandalo belonged was then quite numerous in the mountains. The sight of the lovely quadron had sufficed to generate an ineffaceable impression in the heart of the youthful warrior. Perhaps this passion was requited; but Judith had clung to the master with whose fate she felt her own to be inextricably blended, although the attachment thus formed between her and her Indian lover was never obliterated. Here, indeed, was the secret loadstone which held the warrior to the old scenes which his tribe had long deserted.

So now we see them together, as the night falls around them, like the many years that have dropped upon their hearts since the hot blood was coursing in their veins. And Judith does not take her hand from the pensive savage. There is something so mournful and tender between these two forlorn wild beings, that each experiences the personal influence of the other as a feeling balmy and grateful. Well may it be thus with these two hearts, so fierce and lonely, each stained with crimes which the blind, passionate temperament of the possessor justifies as inevitable; and each yearning with that hungry longing which descends upon the hopeless of soul.

At length, Judith broke the long silence:—

“Has the dark deed of an hour ago come yet to the chieftain's knowledge?” she asked.

“Yes, my sweet Flower. And the doer, whoever he

be, hath one crime the more to lay like a burden at the foot of the Great Spirit's throne."

"And I one foe the less," said the quadroon, moodily. "There are but two left now, Wandalo. My vengeance is almost complete."

"And yet the white Lily of the Valley, at the white chief's mansion on the mountain side, will droop in the blight that snatched her brother bloom," said the savage, pityingly.

"Let her droop!" was the fierce rejoinder; and Judith snatched her hand from the Indian's hold. "The Thunder-Scorner is no friend of the Passion-Flower, if he would water the Lily with a pitying tear!"

"The Great Spirit gave the chieftain a tender heart," was the low reply. "Wandalo cannot forget the bright Sunbeam, with the golden hair, that played on the slopes when the valley was young and the pale faces were few; how shall he forget the glorious pure Lily that now droops at her brother's grave!"

"It must be otherwise!" said the quadroon, in a voice almost inaudible with passion. "Has thy love for the Passion-Flower grown cold, Wandalo?"

The chieftain flung himself at her feet.

"The love of Wandalo has never cooled," he cried. "Oh, it is not too late! Be mine, be mine, dark Blossom of the glens. We will leave these scheming white men to themselves, and the wild, free mountains shall be our home. The bloom of our youth is passing away, but it were sweet to wither in each other's arms. Be my bride, dark Flower of my thoughts! Or name a test of Wandalo's love. What shall he do to gain the high ledge whereon thou growest so darkly bright? Be mine, be mine!"

This outpouring of the Indian's love had gushed like a geyser through the frost of his usually imperturbable mien. Judith rose to her feet, and looked down upon him with folded arms; and there was something tender and profound in her stern, dark gaze.

"Listen, Wandalo," said she, in low, trembling tones. "This is not the only time I have seen you at my feet. My answer has hitherto been adverse to thy suit. The time has come when it may be otherwise. I bid thee hope."

The Indian sprung to his feet with a joyful cry; but she motioned him back.

"Not so fast!" she continued, with a sombre smile. "There is a condition. The chieftain bids me to test his love; and it shall be so. But he must toil indeed, if he would gain the ledge whereon I bloom."

"Let the Passion-Flower but breathe her terms," was the reply.

"My terms are these," cried Judith: "The chieftain must crush all pity from his heart. Thou knowest the dark tale of my early life; thou knowest my vengeance is not complete. The owner of Misty Mount and his daughter are the only two left in my path to triumph. Have I Wandalo's arm to do my bidding?"

The Indian hung his head, and answered remonstratingly:—

"But why should the vengeance of the dark beauty extend so far? The pale face of the grand mansion was not her wronger; it was his brother, who is already in the tomb."

"My hatred extends not only to his family, but to his race," was the stern reply.

"Alas! and must the Lily, Ida, also perish!"

"Ay, and more than perish!"

The Indian looked up inquiringly.

"She must perish twofold," was the dark reply.

"How may that be, my dark beauty? One cannot die but once."

"A woman can!" exclaimed the quadroon. "First in her happiness; then in her life—the lesser death."

"The Gloomy Blossom cannot mean—"

"Ay!" was the fierce anticipation of his horrified query.

"The lady Ida shall perish first as *I* perished. *I* was as fresh, as glad, as bright as she; what am *I* now? The fiend thou seest. Oh, she shall also drink the cup of misery—to the dregs—to the dregs!" she repeated, vehemently, pacing to and fro, and rubbing her hands feverishly. "Oh, she shall also feel the iron in her soul! She shall become the wife of one she hates! The backward look shall be a glance of horror to her heart! She shall behold the barrier between her and her olden happiness as a heaven-reaching, star-blotting wall of adamant, as *I* behold it. Oh, she shall writhe—writhe—writhe! Ha! does the chieftain relent his love? Does he fear to trample on his pity?"

There was no reply. A fearful contest was raging in Wandalo's bosom—a war of good and evil, in which the one or the other must be exterminated. He trembled violently as his forehead sunk below her burning gaze.

"Determine quickly!" cried the beautiful fiend. "My love or my hatred; choose! I see. Thy cowardly pity is triumphant. Farewell!"

She turned to go; but the victory was hers and Satan's! The chieftain raised his stormy face, staggered an instant as in perplexity, and then sprung forward, and clasped her in his arms.

"Thou art mine! thou art mine! Oh, wild, fierce spirit!" he cried. "Speak, and thy word is law to the Thunder-Mocker. Let the pale-face perish, and the Lily wither in the soil; thou art the only bloom for me!"

Judith returned his embrace with an eager joy; and, for the first time, their lips met in a burning kiss, like the sealing of a frightful bond.

"Yes, I am thine for ever, Wandalo!" murmured she; "and, in our own good time, we will seek the distant mountains for a home!"

"What are the plans of the Passion Flower?"

"They are few and simple. Heartstead Gleason is the tool we must use. He loves the girl; but he is naturally wicked, and the knowledge that she loves him not has made him moody and desperate. She shall be his wife by force. Leave me to deal with him. The time is not quite ripe. But be thou ready when the moment comes; and, in the mean time, loiter around the Gwins as of old, and learn what thou canst. I shall await thee here, at this hour, every night, until the mine is sprung. Farewell! I must now depart."

But the chieftain clasped her once again before she went, when the quadroom moved hastily up the lawn. The savage watched her figure till it was lost in the trees; and, even then, he stood motionless for many moments, as if buried in profound meditation.

Who may say what passed in that dusky bosom during those sombre moments? Was the contest for the sovereignty of his soul resumed? or had victory been decisive and absolute? Did his thoughts dance backward through the years again to the little bright-haired Ida, whose innocence and purity had fanned the angel flame within his breast? or did he dwell passionately on the

fierce, lustrous being whose burning kiss yet lingered on his lips, like the taste of an elixir of evil? We cannot tell. But, whatever his thoughts, his brow was knitted into iron lines; and he seemed to have grown older—much older. Presently he drew his blanket around him, and glided away into the gloom with a noiseless step.

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER AND SON

Oh woe is it, when mortal man
For man's destruction spreads the snare!
The vengeance, which, with time began,
Shall overtake him here or *there*.

WHEN Heartstead Gleason had led his father into a small chamber, which appeared like a study, in an upper story of the dismal mansion, and had locked the door carefully, he threw himself at full length on a lounge, while his father drew up a chair, first, however, lighting a rusty iron lamp, from which a feeble glimmer was emitted.

"What is your object in returning home?" asked the old man. "Do you not know your peril?"

"Yes, and I scorn it," was the gloomy reply.

If affection existed between them, it must have been a singular attachment. Father and son, long separated from each other; and yet no word of greeting passed between them, hardly a kind glance even.

"You have heard the news?" inquired Heartstead.

"Yes—yes!" replied the old man, pettishly, thinking of the death of the younger Gwin. "Good enough news. I am sure; but—"

"Good news!" exclaimed the other, with a shocked expression. "Well, it may seem so to you; but as for me; the ties of blood are still strong."

"Pshaw! what ties of blood are you speaking of?"

"Thought you had heard the news!"

"What news?"

"That brother Charles is no more."

The sudden anguish that wreathed the old man's wrinkled face would have been a glad study for Parrhasius.

"Charlie—my little Charlie dead!" he murmured, in dismay. He bowed his face in his hands, and humanity vindicated her sway in a flood of tears. He rocked himself to and fro dismally for a few moments before he regained his composure.

"He died bravely, and for the King," said Heartstead.

"When—how?"

"Yesterday—where the upper road strikes into the mountains. Colonel Ferguson sent a dozen of us up to intercept a certain Colonel Cleaveland, who was riding alone and bearing despatches from the north. Curse him! He burst through our ambush, knocked down three or four of us, and escaped; not, however, without leaving a pistol-bullet in poor Charlie's head.

"Cleaveland—Cleaveland! I know the name—a Northern rough-rider and a villainous Rebel. Why he passed through the valley this afternoon, and stopped at Misty Mount on the way to Valleyton."

"Then he saw Ida?"

"Very probably; but she has something else to think of than a handsome colonel. Of course, you've heard of Walter Gwin's death?"

"No. You astonish me!"

"It is true. Cleaveland had not been gone ten minutes before the young viper was shot dead by some one concealed in a thicket close at hand."

"A dastard shot!"

"But say a lucky one also. Do you not see—"

"I see but one thing, and that is my old schoolmate weltering in his blood. We were once good friends. God rest him! He was a gallant fellow!" A genuine emotion worked in the young Tory's face, and his voice was broken as he paid this tribute to his playmate's memory.

"Nonsense!" said the sterner father. "Do you not see that Ida becomes sole heiress of Misty Mount?"

"Much good it will do me—a man whom she hates!" was the bitter rejoinder.

The old man bit his lips. At length he said with a sneer:—

"Certainly the good accruing to you therefrom will not be great, if you give it up like a coward."

"Give what up!"

"Your suit for the heiress of Misty Mount."

"Is it not hopeless?" moaned Heartstead, despairingly.

"Yes, for a hopeless man. Be of good heart—be resolved, and she shall yet be yours."

"How?"

"By any means—by force, if necessary. Cornwallis is advancing—the rebels flying. You can raise a dozen friends, even here in the valley, to carry off the beauty."

"That would be gaining her love with a vengeance."

"Pshaw! Think of the property!"

"Perish the property!" cried the young man, fiercely, his dark features lighting up with scorn. "You may have the property; I want the heart!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed a strange laugh from the passage-way outside the bolted door; "Ha! ha! ha! And what if she loves another, my brave Tory."

"It's that infernal jade, Judith!" cried the young man, rushing to the door with ungovernable fury; but before he could open it the laugh was heard running away through the distant passages.

"Don't put yourself out of humour for the quadroom," said the old man, soothingly. "Besides, her suggestion is worth considering."

He said no more, for he saw that Judith's taunt had set the young man thinking; and he resolved to let the venom have time to work.

In truth, a black, anxious look rested upon the handsome but sinister features of Heartstead Gleason, as he paced the room with folded arms, and his chin upon his breast. That startling sentence, "And what if she loves another!" rung in his ears with fearful emphasis. The fiend was at work in his breast. Presently his brow cleared slightly.

"It is impossible!" he said, "I know the valley by heart; and there is not a man in it for whom she cares a straw."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed that wild laugh again, from the passage without. "But Cleaveland, Colonel Cleaveland!"

"Hag! slave! but this time you shall not escape me!" roared Heartstead, tearing open the door, and springing into the hall.

No one was to be seen. The voice might as well have been bodiless, for aught he could discern.

"Pshaw! be calm!" said the father's soothing voice, once more, as the other closed and locked the door.

Then the old man was again quiet; for there was new venom to be left to work its way, as the young man resumed his moody, arm-folded pacing, with that last sen-

tence—"But Cleaveland, Colonel Cleaveland!"—hissing through his brain like the tongue of an angry cobra. Presently he paused at the open window, and looked out into the night.

"Why, what is this?" he exclaimed; "what a sudden storm! The earth is as black as Erebus!"

The old man also approached the window, and glanced out.

"Come, my son, you had better get some sleep," said he. "You are anxious and worn out." So saying, he took the lamp and led Heartstead away to his chamber.

Poor fellow! The moon was beaming brightly and peacefully over the whole landscape. The only storm was that which raged within his own bosom and brain.

CHAPTER V.

HOPE AND DESPAIR.

I love thee, lady! My bosom bounds beneath thy smile
As doth the sea unto the moon, his mighty mistress!
Looking up to her, and murmuring—
"Lovely, lovely, lovely! Lady of the Heavens!"

FESTUS.

Two weeks had passed at Misty Mount since the lamentable incident with which our second chapter closed; and Colonel Cleaveland had been a frequent visitor at the mansion. Valleyton, where he was posted, was so very near; and then the afflicted ones were fond of his society, and the genuine zeal with which he had instituted search for Walter's murderer, had elevated him even more in their esteem. Two weeks had passed, and the young captain was at rest beneath the turf of the pleasant valley; but though that subdued and silent air which fills the heavens upon the taking away of a beloved and

cherished form still pervaded the atmosphere of the manor-house and its surroundings, the soothing solace of time was beginning to heal the wounds of sorrowing hearts. Cleaveland had been so good and kind, he was so courtly and refined in his manners and feelings, that it was little to be wondered at that those two weeks of sorrow and sympathy had drawn him closer into the lonely household. The old man had come to love him dearly; and Ida—what can we say but that she too loved the brave soldier and true friend?

Cleaveland was an excellent reader; and the shelves of the Gwin library were loaded with the lore and poesy of the not dead past. Nothing was more delightful than to hear his deep voice on the pensive rhapsodies of Dante, the balmy love-wails of Petrarch, the sweet strains of Spenser, or the grand, high imagery of Milton's muse. Besides, he was a musician. What could be more delightful and consoling than the harmonies of the guitar to those whose souls were pining for peace. In a hundred ways, he exercised his ingenuity and talents to bring back the old happiness to Misty Mount. And, though the new grave on the hill, the empty chair at the table, and the well-known sword that hung so brightly and lonesomely over the portrait of its former owner on the drawing-room wall—though these were ineffaceable mementoes of the "gone, for ever gone," the efforts of the handsome officer were not wholly without success; and every day he was looked for with increased pleasure. It was such a short distance to the camp at Valleyton—barely a ten minutes' gallop—that there was no excuse for his not riding over to the mansion every day. And the lovely Ida began to experience a thread of tenderness in this gratification which she would have been extremely

unwilling to confess. Jenny, her maid, a bright black girl, saw the light impression which was gradually deepening in her mistress's feelings, and was not slow to talk in favour of the colonel's appearance.

"La, Missus," said she, one day, while doing up the fair tresses of her mistress, "la, but dat Cunnel Cleavelan', if he isn't de sweetest gemman I ever set eyes on. Twice as handsome as any one in de valley, an' almost as magnificent as poor Massa Wally was. An' oh, what a beautiful miniature dat is what he carries roun' his neck!"

"Miniature?"

"La, Miss, how you start! You nearly drawed your back hair out by de roots. Oh, my! how many dimons and camphires, and ametwists dere is strung roun' dat sweet lady's picture!"

"Lady's picture!"

"Yes. But la, Miss Ida, how pale you've growed all on a sudden! Wait till I get your smellin' bottle."

"Nonsense, you silly thing! Go on with my hair. Every one has a right to wear a lady's miniature, if one chooses."

"Yes, Missus; but every one isn't so lucky as to hab one strung all roun' wid dimons, camphires—"

"Nonsense, I say! You say it was a lady's face?"

"Yes, Miss, and sich a face? I declar' I neber see'd de like. Sich eyes! sich hair! sich lips! an', oh golly! sich a nose. Oh, Missus! it looked jis' like—jis' like—jis' like pop-corn."

"How could it look like that, you silly thing?" cried Ida, laughing in spite of herself.

"I mean it look jis' like dat are tastes, you know."

"In the first place, how did you happen to see this miniature?" continued Ida.

"La, Miss, dat night when it blowed an' rained so, and Massa made de cunnel stop all night, I see'd him fastenin' of it round his neck when I fetch'd de shavin' water up to him in de mornin'. Oh, golly ! sich a face !"

"There, that will do, Jenny."

But, nevertheless, do what she would, Ida could not drive Colonel Cleaveland's miniature from her mind. She found herself imagining its appearance with a painful curiosity. It could not be the picture of a wife. She had heard the colonel mention that he was a bachelor. It must be of a sweetheart. And yet might it not be a cousin, an aunt, a friend ? It is seldom that young men burden their hearts with the gem-encircled portraits of cousins, aunts, or female friends. In fact, whose could it be ? "Well," thought Ida, laughing to herself, "it is not a particle of difference whose it is." "But," sighed Ida's heart, with a voice so low that she could not hear it herself, "but it is very provoking that Colonel Cleaveland should wear the miniature of a beautiful lady in his breast."

The colonel himself was none the less welcome at Misty Mount, nor the less agreeable and fascinating.

One sunny afternoon, at about the close of this eventful fortnight, Ida put on her hat, and sauntered down the bank of the river alone. She had wandered several furlongs from the house before she was aware of it ; but, as she found herself approaching a cool clump of maples, in which she remembered there was a little retreat her father had made many years ago, she went on, intending to rest herself there before returning.

As she entered the wood, a short distance from the road, and between the road and the river, she was surprised, almost startled, to perceive that Wandalo was

walking by her side. So stealthy was the tread of the Indian, that his step was noiseless on the sward.

"How you startled me, Wandalo!" she exclaimed, but smiling forgiveness upon him. "Great Heaven! what is the matter?"

The chieftain had merely raised his head, without answering, and this last exclamation was caused by the woful change that had been wrought in his dark face since she had last seen him. A hundred wrinkles seemed to have been added. Gaunt, sallow, and emaciated, and hesitating in his manner, he no longer seemed the sturdy and confident savage of old.

"Has Wandalo been sick?" she asked, kindly taking his hand.

He laid his hand upon his heart, and sighed deeply.

"A little further on and the sweet Flower will find a pleasanter shade than this," he said, as they drew near the retreat, but not making any reply to her previous question.

"Thank you; then I will go on to find it," she replied. "Will not the chieftain accompany his little Flower? No? Well, good-bye, then."

She touched his hand again, and passed on, as he answered her invitation with a gloomy shake of the head. The Indian looked after her with a strange earnestness and hesitation, as her lithe figure glided into the denser thicket. Once he sprung forward as if to bring her back; his lips swelled as if with a pent-up cry. But he suppressed his intention, whatever it was, stamped angrily on the ground, and turned swiftly away in another direction.

Expecting to find the cool retreat awaiting her, and wondering at the great change which had come over

Wandalo, Ida continued her way, but was alarmed to find the thicket grow denser at every step, although it could not have been far from the broad road that ran down to the village. Thinking that she must have mistaken the Indian's directions, and considerably vexed, she at length turned to retrace her steps.

But Heartstead Gleason stood in her pathway.

"Mr. Gleason!"

"Ida!"

"It is not right for you to startle me in this way, sir," she said, with a pout on her lip. "Nor is it proper for you to call me by my first name, sir."

"I call you by the name which is the sweetest sound on earth, or, I believe, in heaven, Ida," said the youth, and with a mournful earnestness that filled her breast with pity. "I saw you enter here, Ida. I must speak with you; so I followed."

"I was not aware that you were at home," she said. "Is there not danger in your presence in the valley?"

"Not more danger than I would confront a thousand times to accomplish that which brought me hither. Am I not sadly changed since you saw me last?"

"Greatly," she said, gazing with profound pity into the young man's face, with its handsome, but attenuated features, and too lustrous eyes. "You must have been ill," she added.

"Yes, I have had sickness and sorrow enough, Ida. My brother is slain, and I am quite friendless."

"What, Charlie? Charlie slain? He was a gay, happy spirit. We grow accustomed to death in time of war; but I could have better spared a closer intimate than my old playfellow. Ah, I can sympathize with you deeply, as you must know!"

"Yes, Ida, I heard of your gallant brother's death with sincere sorrow. We have both had our sorrows. But it was neither grief nor sorrow for the dead that harrowed my frame and emaciated my face as you see them. It was my hopeless love for you, Ida—my unrequited but eternal passion."

"If you continue in this vein, sir, I shall be very much offended," she replied, looking quite pale.

"Oh, Ida, hear me but for moment! Let me—"

"No, sir, I will not hear you!" she exclaimed, with spirit. "It is to your shame that you thus persecute me. Allow me to go out of the thicket, sir."

He raised his eyes and glanced at her with the bold calmness of despair, but continued immovable in the narrow path.

"Allow me to pass, sir!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"Will you not hear me first?" he asked, with dreadful calmness.

"No."

"You must!"

"Sir—"

A sudden gust of passion seized the young man, and bore him along impetuously.

"Oh, Ida! Ida!" he burst forth, flinging himself on his knees at her feet, "hear me—hear me, or I die! I am friendless on the wide, bleak earth. My father is a sordid miser; my bright, gay brother is blotted from the living world; I am a despised and hunted man—the partisan of a sinking cause. I am friendless! friendless! friendless!"

His words were almost smothered in sobs. Ida's resentment vanished immediately. She was grieved and shocked,

"You shall not be friendless. I will be your friend, Heartstead," she exclaimed, bending over him with brimming eyes. "There, there—do not weep!"

For an instant—a brief one—his moody soul was bathed in her tenderness, and he mistook the feeling for a ray of hope.

"God bless you for that! Perhaps you may love me, then? Perhaps—"

"As a sister, only, Heartstead."

"Oh, try—only try to love me, Ida!" groaned the wretched man, with renewed vehemence. "I will be your slave—I will do your slightest behest—I will die for you; only say that you may—not that you shall, but that you may—be mine! Give me hope, or death."

"You forget yourself, sir," said the lady, coldly. "I cannot hear you further. Let me pass."

"Is it so?" he cried, springing to his feet, changed suddenly from the suppliant to the fierceness of despair. "Why, then, you shall be mine!"

She saw the mad glitter in his eyes, and almost sunk beneath their scorching splendour. Then, for the first time, did this innocent girl experience what a terrible thing to her—what a terrible thing it must be to any woman—to confront a desperate man. The madman grasped her wrist. She tried to shriek, but could not; she felt his hot breath on her icy brow. She struggled, but in vain.

"Ida!" murmured the wretched young man, whom baffled passion was hurrying to insanity, "Ida! Ida!" he murmured, "God meant you for me. It is idle to struggle against Fate. I will bear you to a clergyman who awaits us. You must—"

She also, through her agony of terror, caught the sound

that interrupted her tormentor. It was the rapidly-approaching gallop of a horse, on the adjoining road. It sent a thrill of hope to her heart. Her strength was renewed; her voice returned to her aid. Shriek upon shriek she uttered, as she struggled to free herself from his arms. She paused. Her cry was answered by a loud halloo. She heard the horse stop scarcely a rod from where she was; then came the breaking of branches and the crushing of leaves, as if some one was bursting through the thicket to her aid. Just as Gleason had released her, and fled, with a cry of baffled purpose, her rescuer stood at her side, in the person of Colonel Cleveland; and Ida sunk senseless to the earth.

Cleveland took her in his arms, and bore her to the edge of the river, to bathe her forehead in the wave. As he did so, and gazed upon her pure, fair brow and faultless face, so inanimate and still, a sweet, religious feeling of love and awe crept into his heart, and filled him with strange thoughts. Casting a hurried look around him, he bowed his head and imprinted a soft kiss upon her forehead. Then, as if alarmed at his own presumption, he hastily applied the cool current of the running water to her temples. She sighed, opened her eyes, and appeared bewildered:—

“Where am I?”

“With one who will take good care of you,” he replied, respectfully, but with a smile to reassure her. Then, seeing that she wished to arise, he released her from his support, and helped her to her feet.

“Not so fast, my dear lady! You are still feeble,” he continued, as she tottered forward. “There—there; lean on my arm, and we will walk up together.” So saying, and in spite of her slight resistance, he made her take his

arm, and almost carried her toward the road, which was close by.

There, placing her on his steed, he held her on with one hand, and, taking the bridle with the other, led the way up to Misty Mount, without a word; for the lady was still too agitated to speak much, and Colonel Cleaveland was too well-bred to annoy her with questions—only too happy at having been the instrument of her delivery from peril, whatsoever it might have been.

But a few minutes were required to reach the mansion, and the gallant colonel put his lovely charge in the care of black Jenny, not, however, without receiving murmured thanks from the lady herself.

In a brief time, her equanimity was perfectly restored. Of course, it was impossible to keep from her father the name of her mad lover, and the colonel soon became aware of it also. The old man was in a towering rage. He vowed vengeance, if it took his last dollar to bring Heartstead to justice. But, Ida, fearing the consequences, and, now that she was safe at home, controlled by her forgiving nature, was disposed to alleviate the rage of her sire. Besides, she really did believe that Heartstead had been actuated by temporary insanity, and urged her plea for forgiveness like an angel of mercy.

"Help me, colonel—help me to soothe this grim protector of mine," she said, turning to Cleaveland.

"Certainly; as far as you are yourself concerned in this affair, Miss, I shall do so," he replied; "but I am sorry to say that it is my duty to take this man in custody for another reason."

"Wherefore?"

"Because he is an enemy and a traitor to my Government, Miss."

"But, my dear sir, it appears very coincidental—this sudden prompting of your duty happening at the same time with this provoking affair of mine."

"Miss Gwin may, nevertheless, perceive that the coincidence was a mere freak of chance," replied the officer, taking a paper from his breast and presenting it to her. "Here," he continued, "is an order I received this morning from General Gates, directing the arrest of a certain Heartstead and a certain Charles Gleason, notorious Tories, and openly in arms for King George, who are supposed to be concealed at their father's residence in the vicinity of Valleyton."

"It is indeed so ; and I have nothing further to urge," said Ida. "But, alas ! one of these young men you cannot arrest. Charles Gleason is no more. His brother mentioned the fact of his death ; and I have but just learned from Jenny that the young man was slain about two weeks ago, by an American officer, just where the North Roan strikes the mountains."

"Good heavens ! can it be ?" exclaimed Cleaveland ; "I fear, then, that it was my hand that did the deed."

He briefly narrated the adventure with the party in ambush, much the same as we have heard it related by Heartstead Gleason to his father.

By this time Cleaveland's escort, who were to aid in the contemplated arrest, came galloping up to the porch, and he led them to Gleason's house with the utmost despatch and secrecy.

But, if they had been "shod with felt," and possessed of the fleetness of birds, their mission must have failed ; for the keen eye of the watching Wando saw their arrival from his hiding-place, and, guessing their object, had fled with his information to Judith.

And now, to return to the unhappy Judith, and the atmosphere of wickedness which hung so darkly around the dismal mansion of Jacob Gleason.

Night was drawing on, and the quadroom was expectantly sitting in front of the little arbour at the foot of the lawn, when she heard the low, shrill note of Wandalo's whistle, and the next instant he was at her side.

"What brings you?"

"Is not my brow dark with the evil news I bear?" said the wretched Indian.

"How!" cried Judith, with impatient emphasis. "Did you not perform my bidding? Did you not lead the girl into Heartstead's hands? Did he not carry her off in the canoe?"

"The Thunder-Mocker obeyed the Passion-Flower."

"And she escaped?"

"Ay—the Lily of the Valley is happy still."

He briefly related the rescue by Cleaveland, and the flight of Heartstead; together with the fact that the latter was in danger of arrest.

"The plot is not broken—only delayed," said Judith. "Do you not know some cavern in the mountains in which we can conceal the young man?"

"Yes; there is a cave on the eastern face of the Misty Mountain, which is known but to Wandalo and the eagles."

"Away, then, and bring Heartstead hither. I also will accompany you to the cave. Why do you hesitate?"

"Oh, my fierce, wild spirit!" cried the remorseful Indian, falling on his knees before her.

"What would you have?"

"Pity—pity for the white Lily of the Vale!"

"Never! Away, weak heart! Have you not learnt that pity was not for me? Away! and if you breathe that word again, we part for ever!"

"Nay, say not so! See—Wandalo obeys his Flower!" whined the savage; and he slunk away in the woods.

In a few minutes he returned, followed by Heartstead.

The latter eyed Judith with repugnance; but he did not now approach her with menace and abuse, as had been his custom. He had latterly learned to fear as well as to distrust her power over others. Nevertheless, there was gloom and hatred in his tone.

"Whither do you propose to hide me?"

"In Wandalo's cavern on the mountain," said Judith. "Be not downcast, Heartstead. She shall be your bride. The plot shall yet triumph."

"A curse on the plot and you together, you slave! I will no more of it."

"Coward!" she hissed between her teeth; "coward! are you dashed by such a little failure?"

"Yes," said he, moodily. "This morning I was at least a man. Now I am meaner than a dog. Say what you please; I give it up."

"There is one I know of who will be delighted with your valorous determination."

"Who?"

"Colonel Cleaveland."

"Curse him!" cried the other, his face almost black with passion. "And yet—and yet," he continued with more calmness, "what has Cleaveland to do with the affair of this afternoon? He was not there."

"Not there! Ha! ha!" mocked the implacable quadroon, "you must have fled fast indeed, and without a backward glance. Why, man, he was her rescuer.

Wandalo saw him carry her to the river when she had swooned. Not only this, but Wandalo saw him kiss her forehead and embrace her."

"Oh, misery! can this be true?" groaned the wicked man. "Lead me wherever you will, then; do as you please with me. If I but have vengeance on this Cleaveland — this murderer of my brother, I am satisfied!"

Wandalo took the lead, while Judith and Heartstead followed him toward the mountain.

Their forms were scarcely out of sight of the open lawn, when Cleaveland, at the head of his troop, came swiftly up the road, and in a few moments the house was completely surrounded.

"Is there a person named Heartstead Gleason within this house?" asked the commander of the astonished negro who had opened the door.

"No, sah."

"Is his father in?"

"Yes, sah."

"I would see him in private. Request him to come in the parlour," said the officer, entering the drawing-room with an air of most perfect *nonchalance*.

In a few moments old Jacob Gleason entered the room.

"To whom am I indebted for the honour of this visit?" he coldly inquired.

"To Colonel Cleaveland, of the Continental Army, sir. Do I address Mr. Jacob Gleason?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have an order for the arrest of your son, sir. He is at present within this house, or upon these premises. I demand that you produce him instantly."

"I assure you, sir, I know nothing of his whereabouts. He is at present with the army of Lord Cornwallis, I believe, and—"

"Excuse me, sir, you state that which is positively false," said the officer, firmly. "Not only is the person in question within this vicinity, but he, this afternoon, attempted to carry off the person of the daughter of your neighbour, Mr. Gwin. Your house is surrounded; I will search it immediately and without ceremony, unless you produce the man."

"Colonel Cleaveland is at perfect liberty to search as much as he pleases," said the old man, coolly; well aware that he was safe in giving the permission, since Heartstead must by this time be far away.

So the search was instituted, and, of course, without result. The whole vicinity was scoured, likewise, but with no better success; and, finally, late in the night, Cleaveland reluctantly gave the order to have done.

"Well, I expected nothing more, my dear colonel," said old Godfrey Gwin, when Cleaveland was standing despondingly in the drawing-room of Misty Mount. "You see this is a wide valley; there are many clumps and thickets in it, and the neighbouring mountains are honeycombed with caves. You have done your duty. Trust to luck and another time."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOUNTAIN CAVERN.

The birds of the air shall leave their nests; the beasts shall seek the mountains, and in the caverns of the earth the hunted man shall make his dismal abode.

THE cavern to which Wandalo led Heartstead Gleason was situated nearly half-way up the rocky side of Misty

Mountain, and entirely invisible from below, so bold and huge was the rocky ledge that jutted over the narrow bridle-path which wound around the mountain but a few feet below the mouth of the cave. The entrance was, indeed, hardly discernible from a higher stand-point, as it was quite narrow and thickly overgrown with briars and other underbrush, though the cavern itself broadened and heightened extensively a few paces from its mouth. It then ran deep into the breast of the mountain, like a long, dark, winding corridor, when, at a distance of probably four hundred feet from the outer world, the cavern suddenly made an end in a splendid lofty chamber, which, when illuminated with torches, was rendered wonderfully lustrous by the reflection from the glittering spars and crystals which composed its sides, and hung in long stalactites from the arching roof.

Several nights after the events of the last chapter, this great natural temple in the heart of the mountain, as it might be called, was partially illuminated by several torches; and a party of Tories, mostly young men of the neighbourhood, were in council therein, with Heartstead Gleason at their head. A rude table was placed in the centre of the apartment, around which these worthies were sitting. In fact, it was more like a carouse than a council. The board was pretty liberally supplied with brandy and wines, and a huge dish of fish temptingly crowned the middle.

But there was one who sat at the board, and who drank deeply too, whose features were lined with the furrows of mental anguish. This was young Gleason. Occasionally he would join in the laugh of his comrades, but in a crazy, feverish way, which was a mockery to honest merriment. And then, again, he would rest his

head upon his hand, with downcast eyes, as if his thoughts were far away, and in a gloomier sphere.

"Come, Heartstead," at length said Will Fashdon, a dashing young Tory, with a sword at his side and the red uniform of King George on his back, "are you always to be a skeleton at the feast? Confound it, man, you look the least like an expectant bridegroom of any man I ever saw!"

"As I am very far from being an expectant bridegroom, my appearance, then, will not cause me the slightest uneasiness," returned Gleason, with a dreary smile.

"What are we going to carry the girl off for, pray tell me, then?" asked Fashdon.

"Do you suppose she will love me, after I have carried her off, any readier than before?" said the young man, bitterly.

"The devil take the difference," chimed in Michael Field, an Irish Tory from further down the valley. "It's not ivery mon that can nab a wife without the troublesome ceremony of paternal consent."

This congratulatory rally produced a great deal of merriment; but Gleason only frowned, and relapsed into his melancholy reserve.

"Let me see; what was the time agreed upon?" asked Fashdon.

"Next Winsday night, you loon," said the Irishman. "Will you niver git done wid stuffin' that muddy head of yours with brandy?"

"It wasn't Wednesday, but Thursday," cried another.

"Ha! ha! Mike's as drunk as a bed-bug!" laughed the rest.

"I protist it was Winsday," said Field, getting angry.

It was left to Heartstead, but he could remember nothing.

"Call in Judith," said some one. "Wandalo ! Wandalo !"

The savage appeared at the entrance.

"Call Judith !"

"She can come without calling," said the quadroon, and the next instant she stood in their midst.

"Bless my sowl ! She comes on to a mon like the ghost of a spirit," muttered the Irishman, looking really scared at the suddenness of her entrance.

"What was the time you fixed for the raid on Misty Mount, Judy ?" asked Fashdon.

"Tuesday night, fool !" she exclaimed, contemptuously. "The time was fixed an hour ago. Every one heard it and agreed to it. You are drunk !"

"I don't care ; I won't be jawed by a nigger—take that !"

The drunkard raised his fist to strike her ; but before the blow could descend, an alarming hiss, like that of a rattlesnake, arrested it, and Fashdon turned his head to behold Wandalo, crouched on one knee, with his long rifle levelled at his breast.

"Let the white man strike the Passion-Flower," he hissed ; "let him strike her, and he dies !"

"Pshaw !" said the Tory, returning to his seat with a forced laugh.

"Listen," said Judith calmly, and as if nothing had happened ; "listen, and I will repeat the scheme to all of you, so that there may be no mistake. Three nights hence—on Tuesday night—at the middle hour, you are to meet in this cave, leaving your horses on the bridle-path below the ledge. You are then to approach

the manor and take the girl—by stealth if possible, by open force if necessary. She'll be safe enough here with Heartstead, I'll warrant."

"Very good," said one of the gang; "but what will you do with her afterward? She can't stay here always."

"That be her future husband's look-out," said the quadroon. "Away now! The morning breaks."

They were loth to leave the bottles, but one by one they dropped away. Wandalo, also, at a look from the quadroon, slunk into the dark entrance, and she was left alone with Heartstead. He sat silent, with his heavy head supported by a listless hand, and his eyes closed; but it was evident by his laboured breathing, and the occasional working of his features, that he did not slumber. Judith silently seated herself opposite him, and sat eyeing him; and for a long time, they sat thus silently, observer and observed. There was something cold, deadly, frightful, in this subtle power, this magnetic will, which the once-beautiful woman exercised over those whom she would use or destroy. What could it be? The hard, scheming nature of old Gleason, the passionate, moody spirit of Heartstead, the impertubable, ferocious Indian—all were alike under her sway; and she a slave—the despised, trampled creature of an outcast race. It was this—or something like it:—

Judith had but one idea, one pursuit, one hope, one aim in life, and that was vengeance. She had long before bid adieu to joy; she was a stranger to the little pleasures from which even the most wretched are seldom totally debarred. Was it wonderful that that wild glitter which shone upon the one desire, the monomania of her blind, suffering soul—her accomplished vengeance—should have a charm, an only charm, for the

fierce creature? Upon the man who now sat before her she looked as upon a mere instrument to attain her own ends. Not an atom of pity for his wretchedness entered the iron of her being. Perhaps she would crush him when his usefulness was gone. He was of the race which had trampled her down—down. Had she lived in our own times, she would, perhaps, have been the leader of an insurrection before which the horrors of St. Domingo would pale into insignificance. As it was, her baleful power extended into malignity to but few, and they innocent, or mostly so, of any blood, though not innocent of evil-doing.

Heartstead felt her burning gaze upon him, though his eyes remained closed. At length he moved uneasily.

"Take your eyes from me," he growled. "Take them away—they scorch my brain!"

But she did not move.

"Why do you thus torment and annoy me?" said the young man, rising from his seat impulsively, and pacing the floor of the cave. "I should not come to this pass of villainy if it had not been for you," he continued bitterly.

"Not without my help," said Judith. "But would you indeed have relinquished your little beauty—and to the hands of a rival?"

"No, no! curse him! She shall be mine. I will keep her here till she consents to be my wife. But what is this to you? You have no interest here. You know not the power of love, nor the anguish of soul to have a rival."

"No," said the quadroon, quietly. "But think you there is no other cause? Your motive in this scheme is as nothing compared to mine."

"I do not believe it," said the other. "My motive is love—passion—what you will ; yours but a blind malignity against one who never harmed a worm—whose soul is as snowy in its purity as is an angel's in heaven."


"In what do they differ? My motive is the vengeance which has lived with my body and shall endure with my soul, though the night that spheres it be as lasting as the universe. While yours—love, passion, you call it—does it not also pluck the lily from its happiness? Does it propose to leave the vaunted whiteness of your lady love untarnished?"

"True—true," said the young man, mournfully. "And yet, our motives widely differ. I would have her love by a sweet compulsion. I would make her happiness—her glory—my one sole aim in life ; while you would destroy for destruction's sake. The bare reflection that she is pure, guileless, angelic, is as poison to your own fiendish soul."

"'Tis false !" said Judith sternly ; "my vengeance is as holy as your passion. They are equally wicked ; you take your pleasure in one, I in the other. Your case is worse than mine. You have not the incentive of remembered wrongs."

"Pshaw !"

"Yes, wrongs," cried the fierce woman, her voice springing an octave higher, her eyes blazing, her bosom tossing like the stormy ocean, with the gathering passion that leapt to her lips. "Yes, wrongs, wrongs, wrongs !" she cried ; "insult—trampled happiness—and the memory of a mother's wrongs as monstrous as my own ! God ! God ! If I at this moment stood unspotted, angel-pure, the memory of that mother's wrongs alone should hound me



on—alone should beckon me from afar with a bloody hand. I will pursue them to extermination! The name of Gwin shall not breathe upon the earth! And yet, how few they are!—it maddens me to think how few they are! Oh,” cried the fury, “Oh, if I had the power, your race should perish! I crave for slaughter! My hungry vengeance starves for blood! I would kill, kill, kill, kill!”

“For God’s sake, have done!” exclaimed Heartstead, aghast, bewildered at her passion. “By heaven, I renounce your designs! I break the plot! I will not be linked with such a being! Away! You terrify me!”

“You dare not, you cannot escape me!” cried the virago, extending her hand toward him with an imperious gesture. She stood there, calm but terrible. Her eyes blazed fixedly upon him, like a rattlesnake’s; her right hand was stretched toward him like a loadstone; her whole form seemed dilated, colossal, superhuman.

“You will not fail me!” she hissed. “The deed shall be done! You will compel her to be your wife!”

“No, by heaven!” he cried, “I will not harm her. I defy you. I will—”

“But Cleaveland—the happy Cleaveland!”

“He shall not have her, curse him!” cried Heartstead, like a madman; “he shall not have her! I consent—I will carry her off! *He* shall be thwarted, if I compass my own ruin!”

CHAPTER VII.

A NIGHT OF DARKNESS.

AFFAIRS had gone on in the same monotonous but pleasant way at Misty Mount and in the little valley of Valleyton, where Cleaveland’s riflemen were quartered.

The gallant colonel was still a frequent visitor at Misty Mount, and felt deeper in love with its lovely heiress every day, but dared not breathe his passion until assured by time. One evening, however—Tuesday evening—he had been all the afternoon at the mansion, and was returning with Ida from a delightful ramble they had had among the hills, when he was strongly tempted to “trust his fate upon a word,” she was so kind to him, and looked so entrancingly lovely in the mellow light which was flowing from the west. But his heart misgave him, and he refrained until they were in sight of the porch, where Mr. Gwin was waiting for them, when, of course, his chance was over for that day at least. They had a delightful supper, and were rising, Cleaveland intimating his intention to return to his family, as he called his riflemen, when Jenny came in and said it was raining.

“A mere shower should not delay a soldier,” said the colonel, opening the door and looking out; but it was more than a shower. There was a strong gale blowing from the south-west, the rain was pattering sharply, and it was likely that a heavy storm would burst upon them in a short time.

“The equinox, or something like it, this time, my lad,” said Godfrey. “There’s no use of your returning to Valleyton to-night; so consider yourself booked for upstairs lodgings.”

Ida also pressed him to stay; and, as the weather really seemed too threatening, Cleaveland at length consented.

The evening was spent in the usual way. Mr. Dudley, an old gentleman who lived but a mile away, was invited in for a game of whist. Then, when Mr. Dudley had become tired and gone home, and after both Ida and

the colonel had played and sung pretty much everything they could bring to mind, Mr. Gwin sat down to con over the old newspapers, and to dream of victories over the red-coats, while the young persons played backgammon till bedtime.

"*Bonne nuit, Mademoiselle, et songes de plaisir!*" said Cleaveland, gaily, as he went upstairs, receiving as sweet a little fragment of French, in reply, as was ever pouted from pretty lips.

Her face would come before the colonel even when he closed his eyes. He remembered every little word she had spoken—every gesture—every smile; and it was long before he fell asleep.

He did sleep at last, however, and soundly for some time. When he awoke, it seemed to be in the dead of night. The storm was sweeping out of doors with terrific violence, and yet Cleaveland was certain that he had been awakened by some sound not produced by the strife of elements—what it was he could not guess. There it was again. It sounded like a shriek, and yet so much like the yell of the wind around the chimneys that he listened again. It came once more, and this time there was no mistaking it; it was the shriek of a female in distress, and appeared to come from below his room. Bounding from the bed, he hastily huddled on his clothes, grasped his sword and pistol, and rushed out into the utter darkness of the hall. As he reached the head of the stairs, he heard a great uproar below—the oaths and wrangling of angry men, the loud voice of Godfrey, and, finally, that shriek again, and calling on his own name for help. Without a moment's hesitation he sprung down the stairs, gained the lower floor almost at a bound, and burst into the drawing-room, whence the

sounds proceeded. For an instant he staggered back, bewildered at the unexpected sight that greeted his horrified vision. The room was full of ruffians; the old man and a negro, who had fought for him, lay on the floor, weltering in their blood; and the beautiful Ida was struggling in the grasp of a fellow whose face was concealed by a mask, as indeed were those of most of the party. The colonel recoiled for an instant; but it was for an instant only. His presence of mind returned in a flash. Crack! went his pistol, and the nearest robber rolled to the floor a corpse; another one dropped with a perforated heart as his sword leaped from its scabbard; and the next instant he was upon the ruffian in whose grasp the lady was struggling, who thereupon dropped his burden, and crossed swords with the rescuer with a growl of satisfaction. The weapons rung like bells as they clashed together, but they had barely done so before the weapon of the ravisher went whirling across the room, and his breast was defenceless. But a stroke from behind pierced the colonel's arm at this critical moment, and before he was aware of it a heavy slash descended on his head, partially stunning him, and immediately filling his eyes with blood. Fearful that he should be overcome, he sprang forward, as a last effort, and tore the mask from the face of the ruffian whom he had disarmed, disclosing the features of Heartstead Gleason; and then he fainted away.

It was broad daylight when he awoke. The storm had ceased, and the bright sun was streaming through the shattered window. His wounds had been merely flesh ones, but he was, nevertheless, weak from loss of blood, and regained his feet with difficulty. The prostrate forms around him, the confusion of the chamber, and the

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shattered window, quickly brought his wandering senses to the horrible recollection of what had passed. He examined the forms about him, and found that Mr. Gwin still breathed, though senseless from loss of blood; the rest—the negro and the two ruffians whom his own hand had stricken down—were lifeless. With some difficulty on the part of the colonel, in a few minutes Mr. Gwin was revived and able to speak.

"Where am I?" he cried, wildly; "Oh, yes! At them! Strike them down! Do not cry, Ida, you shall be saved!"

"Compose yourself, my dear sir," said Cleaveland, tenderly. "Collect your thoughts, that we may see what can be done."

Reason was not long in returning to old Godfrey, and with it the horrible consciousness that his daughter was gone. Together they searched the house, which everywhere bore marks of depredation. In the room of the young lady there were heart-rending evidences of the cruel raid. A rope-ladder, left dangling from the outer edge of the window-sill, was conclusive proof that by this mode a portion of the gang, at least, had found entrance. The open wardrobe, and some scattered articles of dress, seemed to indicate that the terrified victim had dressed herself before she was seized. Lastly, the senseless form of the half-clad black wench, Jenny, was dragged from under the bed, which partly concealed her. She was stunned by a severe blow on the head, but a splash of cold water revived her.

"Mass'r, Mass'r! Cunnel Cleaveland! Pompey! Cæsar! help, help!" she began to squall with returning consciousness. "Kick him in de jaw, Miss Ida! Wait till I get in his har! Help, help! Mass'r!"

"Stop your howling, wench ! Tell us what you know of this," exclaimed her master.

From what could be gathered, the chamber had been forced in the midst of the storm, some of the gang entering by the window, others by the door, having forced the drawing-room window below. Hearing the sounds, but cut off from escape, Ida had hastily dressed herself, at the same time crying out loudly for help. But the room had been immediately forced, Jenny knocked senseless with the butt of a pistol, and her mistress gagged and borne down the stairs. The ruffians reached the drawing-room before they saw Godfrey, and were on the point of escaping by the window, when the old man entered, with his walking-stick in his hand, followed by his faithful coachman. The latter had been almost immediately slain by a pistol-shot, and, although the old man fought hard, it was not many seconds ere he was likewise laid low. The rest of the tale, after Colonel Cleaveland entered upon the scene, we are already acquainted with.

To describe the heart-rending anxiety which attended and followed these developments were a sorry and useless task. Nothing could be obtained as a clue to the villains, or to the place in which they had immured their victim. Another of the slaves belonging to the place had been killed at the barn, and two more wounded in endeavouring to defend their master's property. All the hands on the plantation were assembled and questioned, but nothing was elicited. The horses had all been stolen from their stalls. Nevertheless, Cleaveland led a party of armed negroes over to Jacob Gleason's plantation, in the vain hope of extorting something from him ; but without success. Nevertheless, they took him in custody, and roused the planters of the vicinity with the harrowing tale. At

length, as the party were returning to Misty Mount, Cleaveland was much gratified to see a dozen of his own rough-riders galloping up to the house from the camp at Valleyton.

"Now we shall have a chance!" he joyfully cried to Gwin, who was moodily awaiting him. "I will scour the entire mountain from summit to base with these hardy fellows, and with far better cheer, depend upon it!"

But the colonel's face fell as he read a paper which one of his men, dismounting, respectfully handed to him.

"Good God!" he exclaimed to his host. "I must go! I am ordered off immediately to join Campbell and others in an attack on King's Mountain. How can I leave you?"

"How, indeed?" replied Gwin.

"I will not leave you in this strait—by Heaven I will not!" exclaimed the colonel, warmly. "Fifty orders shall not compel me to relinquish this search before I restore your daughter to your arms."

The old man covered his face with his hands for a moment, and his frame quivered with the deep emotion which possessed it. But, in a few seconds he mastered his feeling, looked up, and said, firmly:—

"Colonel Cleaveland, your warmth is grateful to my broken heart; but you must, nevertheless, obey the call of your country. You must not even think of disregarding it. The welfare of my daughter, sir, is as a feather's weight in the scale wherein our country's safety is balanced. Farewell! I hope we shall meet again. Howsoever that be, may God-speed be with you now and hereafter. Farewell!"

It was with feelings of scarcely controllable emotion that Cleaveland grasped the extended hand of the noble

old man, whose sublime patriotism had thus triumphed over impulses as deep and strong as a father can feel for his only child.

"You are right," murmured the colonel, with a trembling lip. "Believe me, sir, I can appreciate your noble conduct, which thus recalls me to a sense of duty. Oh, I can sympathize with you more than you imagine, sir!"

"Why?" inquired the other, surprised at his guest exhibiting an emotion almost as profound as his own.

Cleaveland glanced around, and perceived that they were standing apart and beyond ear-shot of his men. And yet he hesitated in reply. His irresolution was of but a moment's duration, however.

"A vicissitude like this demands frankness, Mr. Gwin, and I will speak frankly," said he. "The double reason that my interest in your daughter's safety is so strongly evinced is one, sir, which I now avow. I—I love your daughter—deeply, devotedly, passionately."

"Have you ever spoken to Ida, colonel?" asked the old gentleman, with a pleased expression of the careworn face that made the young man's heart thrill with joy.

"Never," was the reply. "I am wholly ignorant of Miss Gwin's feelings toward me, and would hesitate to wound her gentle nature by a confession of sentiments which might displease her. I merely mention it, that you may know that my sacrifice in being compelled to abandon the search is not inconsiderable. Forgive me if I have been bold; I meant only—"

"I have nothing to forgive, my dear colonel," said the old man, as heartily as his anxiety would permit. "As far as I am concerned, you have my hearty approval in your suit."

"You make me very happy," said the colonel. "Now, a word before I go, and I think it may cheer you. We have come to the conclusion that the raiders of last night were mostly Tories of this vicinity—mainly in the service of the King. Is it not most likely that the service which calls me away so abruptly to the field must also call every Tory within summoning distance to the other side? Ferguson, who commands the red-coats at King's Mountain, has doubtless had wind of our approach, and, depend upon it, he will rake up every available man to meet us. Every Tory around us must, at this moment, be on the wing to join him. Whatever may have been their designs in carrying off Miss Gwin, in all probability she is at present merely kept in concealment, to await the event of battle and young Gleason's return—that is, if he remains true to his colours."

"There is much wisdom in what you say," said Gwin, thoughtfully. "It relieves my anxiety considerably. But the quest shall not fall off in your absence. In the meantime, if you should meet with the villain who carried her off—"

"May an avenging fate permit that I may!" exclaimed the colonel, fervently, his right hand instinctively clutching the hilt of his sword. "One of us shall perish, if we meet! Farewell!"

He galloped to the head of his escort, and, in a few minutes, the little troop were dashing swiftly down to Valleyton.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOVE IN THE HAWK'S NEST.


"Why circles the Hawk o'er the blossoming grove?
Why down does his crooked beak stoop?
Because in the wood sits a white-feathered Dove,
And the Hawk is preparing to swoop."

As we have seen, a happy state of oblivion enveloped the lovely victim of the Tories' raid, when they bore her away from the house and the prostrate forms of those who would have protected her. When her consciousness returned, Ida could scarcely realize even the more material facts of her dilemma. At first she thought that she was in a dungeon. The narrow couch upon which she was reclining she could feel with her hand to be composed of the furry skins of wild beasts; and the feeble glimmer of a small iron lamp, which was hung from the low ceiling, showed the walls of her new apartment to be of granite. Indeed, as she examined their structure more intently, she discovered that no mortal masonry was concerned in the low, vaulted ceiling or narrow walls, but that they were of the solid rock, without a seam. This convinced her that she must be in a cavern, smoothed, doored, and otherwise assisted to the formation of this regular-shaped cell; which only increased her anxiety. An old-fashioned clothes-press, a stool, and a small deal table, with a bowl and pitcher of water thereon, and the couch upon which she had now risen to a sitting posture, constituted the sole furniture of the desolate dungeon, whose floor was of the same solid, immutable granite as the walls and ceiling. Having gathered together her scattered faculties in making these discoveries, the first thing which the terrified maiden did was to cry very heartily and bitterly; which was perfectly

natural. A man, even—thus awakening from home, kindred, and the limitless freedom of the open atmosphere to the stifling air, chill gloom, and cramped dimensions of a subterranean dungeon—would have been likely to give way to some impulses of terrified surprise; what then must have been the anguish of this poor child of luxurious innocence at her unaccountable imprisonment? How must the heart of this little dove have palpitated with despair at discovering that the hawk had borne her to his eyrie. But a few moments, however, were required to bring Ida to a more valiant state of mind, for she was naturally of a brave disposition, and had frequently been vaunted by her father for an amount of “pluck” beyond the usual lot of womankind. Her thoughts were, naturally, at first occupied with reflections upon the motives which could have prompted this outrage upon her liberty and the doers of the deed. Reluctantly, but indubitably, she was at length forced to the conclusion that Heartstead Gleason must be her principal persecutor, prompted by his insane passion for herself, and aided by his fellow-Tories of the neighbourhood; she could think of no others as concerned in the unmanly plot. Indeed, if she had been aware of the extent of Judith’s hatred toward herself and her family, she might have ascribed the chief complicity of the plot to where it rightly rested. But, she knew nothing of this. Her father had always been singularly reticent with regard to what he might know of her, and Judith herself was but known to Ida as the bad-tempered housekeeper of Jacob Gleason, whom, according to the gossip of the valley, she ruled with a rod of iron.

Having thus satisfied her own mind as to the identity of her persecutors, and well aware of the imminent peril

she was in, the brave girl arose to take a further survey of the premises. By a little careful trimming, the lamp was made to emit a considerably stronger beam, when the first novel object that attracted her attention was the door of the apartment, remarkable for its appearance of solidity, and for the size of the hinges and bolts which secured it, and a small window or lattice, diamond-shaped, and so deeply set into the further wall of the dungeon as to be almost invisible in an uncertain light. She first tried the door—merely for the sake of trying, however, as the bolts were shot into their sockets from without the chamber, and would have defied the strength of a Milo. She then tried the lattice, with much more confidence of success. It was only closed with a latch, and immediately yielded to her effort. The solid darkness which confronted her was, for an instant, absolute; but presently the rays of the lamp that swung from the ceiling struggled through the gloom, and glinted faintly on an obstacle a few feet from the opening. This she could reach and touch with her hand, by which she was made aware that it was a blank wall of granite, crusted with glittering crystals and spars. Leaning almost her whole body through the lattice, so thick was the wall in which it was set, she turned her glance upward, and there, far, far above her, she saw the stars shining in a clear heaven, but somewhat obstructed by what appeared the interlacing branches of trees. She then loosened a fragment of crystal from the opposite wall, and let it drop. A cold shudder ran through her frame as she heard the missile going down, down—echoing and echoing against the sides of the cavern, until the reverberations gradually died away in the depths below. She could also now distinguish another faint echo, which



was continuous, and which she rightly conjectured to be the sound of falling water. She came to the conclusion that her dungeon lattice opened upon a fissure in the mountain, very narrow, but of prodigious depth; and her former impression that her dungeon was the cell of some cavern, piercing very deep into the mountain, was confirmed. She also knew, from the appearance of the stars above her head, that her cell must be very far below the surface of the earth. Without thinking of the illusive effect of the deep darkness through which she peered up to the heavens, she thought that it must still be night, because the stars were shining so brightly; whereas the fact was that broad daylight had already broken upon the upper world. It took but a moment to convince her that any escape by way of the chasm was absolutely out of the question, as the sides were almost smooth—and, had they been otherwise, the possibility of clambering them, with that dreadful, echoing, bottomless gulf below, would have been exceedingly dubious. As she was about to draw back into her cell, her eye was arrested by something which gleamed with unusual lustre from a little projection of the opposite wall, but a few feet below her position. She managed to reach and possess it, and it was with an exclamation of genuine joy that, when she brought it into the light, she saw that it was a beautiful small dagger, which had evidently fallen or been thrown from the top of the chasm, and had lodged on the place where she found it. Its blade was hardly rusted, and its hilt was thickly crusted with real gems. A stern smile fitted over the maiden's features as she concealed this prize within the bosom of her dress. She felt stronger, more confident, than before. With a vigilant eye, and faculties quickened by her peril, was she

not now safe—at least, in one sense? Her heart beat rapidly at the thought; but it beat braver, firmer, with the hilt of that small dagger pressing against it. She could not, however, help thinking of the manner in which the weapon had been lodged on the side of the chasm, and morbid images of conjecture flitted through her mind. If the dagger could speak, what dark history of murder might it not unfold? She leaned out of the lattice again, and looked at the niche from which she had taken it with a gloomy curiosity. She shuddered at the idea that perhaps it was the sole, silent witness of some terrible deed—some foully murdered human form which had been flung from the dizzy brink above—perhaps from the edge of the lattice from which she gazed!—and had gone thundering down to the unknown depths below. But the grating sound of the withdrawal of bolts at her prison-door quickly changed this train of thought for an anxious expectancy, and she hastily reclosed the little window, got down from her perch, and stood waiting her visitor.

The last of the massive bolts clanged back from its socket, the door creaked open, and Judith entered the apartment. Her demeanour was much different from its usual pride and gloom. There was a gentle, almost sweet, expression on her lips, and the old wild beauty of the quadron maiden seemed to shine out through the attenuated lineaments of time, with a subdued lustre which was wonderfully winning and trust-inspiring. She was also dressed more neatly than usual. Her jet-black, profuse wealth of hair was gathered up plainly, neatly, and yet with a certain elegance, which added to the quiet charm of her whole appearance. Ida scarcely recognized the Judith she had been accustomed to know and vaguely

fear, in the trim respectfulness of the pretty woman who now entered her apartment. Instinctively the forlorn heart of the captive maiden leaped toward her with an impulse of sympathy. She sprung forward and caught the quadron by the hand, while her large blue eyes looked trustingly in the orbs of the other, as if seeking and bestowing confidence at the same time.

"Tell me—tell me, Judith," she faltered, "why I am treated in this inhuman manner. Oh, think of my father (if he be yet alive). Oh, think of the anguish my absence must cause him! Help me to escape! I see you are kind and good. Pray, help me! What is the meaning of this? Who brought me here?"

"One, sweet maiden," replied Judith—and her tones were as gentle as a dove's—one who would sooner die than cause you pain. If you could behold the brimming heart that prompted to this deed, you would forgive the means by which it sought to woo you. Alas! it is the heart of one grown mad with love."

"His name?"

"Heartstead Gleason. Nay, do not blame till you have heard," purred Judith. "Lady, he loves you as a poet loves the stars in heaven. He will do anything—he will die for you."

"Does he think to win my love by tearing me from my home—by maiming or slaying my protectors?" asked the maiden with bitter sarcasm. "We do not hurt that which we love; we cherish it with gentleness and kindness. Why does he, then, tear me from my home? Why am I abused, insulted in this way?"

"Lady, because he is *mad!*" whispered Judith, with an air of mystery. "I do not use the word merely as it applies to hearts distraught with passion. I mean to say

that at this moment, Heartstead Gleason is mad—utterly insane through grief and jealousy.”

“But I cannot help it,” said Ida, remonstratingly. “I do not love the man, simply because I cannot. I suspected he was insane when he met me the other day in the forest, and offered me violence. I suspected this, and forgave him in my heart. I am sure I can do nothing to restore him to reason; but—”

“Lady, you can—you can do everything. You are the only one who can restore him.”

“How?”

“Give him your love—give way but an iota to his blind, blazing passion, and he will be restored,” said the wily quadroom.

“Most certainly I will do nothing of the kind!” exclaimed the haughty heiress of Misty Mount, indignantly. “I demand to be instantly released from this dismal place! Let me go immediately! It ill comports with your seeming gentleness, Judith, that you thus play the gaoler to an innocent being who never wronged you in thought or deed.”

“What! You—you never wronged me! If I did but think that—” By a great effort Judith controlled the wild passion of her true nature, which had almost betrayed her to Ida. “Forgive me! I—I—that is—” she stammered. “Believe me, sweet lady, you somewhat wrong me in what you say. Remember, I am but a slave. My master’s son compels me to act the part in which you despise me. He wishes to make you his wife. For your own sweet sake I would advise you—”

“Allow me to decline any advice you may think necessary or benevolent to bestow,” said Ida, proudly interrupting her. “To become the wife of one we can-

not love is dishonourable ; and any advice which points to the surrender of a maiden's purest inheritance on earth—her self-respect—is no longer advice, it is villainy !—it is no longer precept, it is insult ! Away ! I will have no more of you !”

Reproach—tearful reproach, leaped out from the dark eyes of the quadroom at these words ; and yet she replied as demurely and respectfully as before :—

“ Since it is your desire, Miss, to think ill of me, do so. It is not for a slave to reply to the heiress of Misty Mount. If you please, will you permit me to go, now ?”

“ Yes—but stay ! To whom do you go ?” asked Ida, as the slave-woman was passing through the door.

“ To my master, Miss.”

“ Bid him set me free this instant,” cried Ida haughtily. “ I will not see him in this dungeon. I will see him as a free woman, or never !”

“ Yes, Miss.” And the quadroom disappeared, closing and bolting the door behind her.

Ida paced the floor in a haughty mood. The spirit of command, bred by her indolent, wilful life, was struggling desperately with the hard circumstances, the humiliating powerlessness, by which she was surrounded. But she had little time for thought or anger, for in a few moments the bolts again clanged back, the immense door again creaked laboriously on its huge hinges, and Heartstead Gleason stood before her.

He was even paler, thinner, than usual ; and the fierce insane light of passion still blazed in his eyes with a fitful gleam. He was dressed in a captain's regimentals of his Majesty's army—scarlet coat and breeches, with heavy riding boots and spurs—as if prepared for a campaign.

"Ida!"

She did not answer. Her indignation made her mute.

"Ida," he began, in tremulous tones, "Ida, I have come—"

"I care not for what you have come!" she burst forth, passionately. "I demand my instant release! Once I pitied you—now I but hate you! No words but of scorn until I stand released!"

"Ida—forgive this artifice—"

"It is no artifice, sir! Palliate it not by that mildly wicked name. It is insult—outrage—crime! Release me on this instant!"

"Ida, forgive! My passion has set me mad! My love—"

"It is false!" she cried, vehemently; "you are a stranger to love! Your utterance of it is a profanation of the holy name! Let me go, I say! Release me from this dungeon!"

"Ida! Ida! oh hear me!" cried the really half-demented man, falling on his knees in a paroxysm of despair. "Hear me!" he moaned. "I love you—madly, madly! No one can tell you how I love you. Save me, or we are both engulfed in one ruin. Help me, or I perish with this consuming passion. Speak, Ida, will you not save me?—will you not love me?"

"Never!" cried the maiden, stung to desperation by the humiliation of her position. "Trust no more in me! If I ever regarded you as a friend, that friendship is now turned to hatred—eternal hatred! If you have poisoned my regard, you must suffer! Release me, I say!"

The young man sprung to his feet, and eyed her with the moody glance of despair.

"Reflect!" he exclaimed, in icy tones. "Reflect! You are in my power—utterly—absolutely—irrevocably!"

"I have reflected," was the scornful rejoinder.

"Is it so?" he cried, his rage gathering fury as he spoke. "Listen, woman. There is one in waiting who has the legal power to make you my wife. Your beauty has driven me mad—desperate! I must—I will have you! You confront a desperate man!"

He advanced toward her. Ida forgot all about her dagger. She was completely bewildered by the maniac blaze of those burning eyes. She was terrified by the vehemence of his demeanour, and burst into tears.

"Have pity—pity," she sobbed, dropping on her knees before him, and extending her clasped hands with an imploring gesture. "Pity! for God's, for your mother's sake, pity!"

He paused, tottering, like a man in a dream. Her tears were washing away his evilness; something of the old, inborn angel illuminated his passion-torn features.

"Yes, I will pity," he muttered, brokenly; "I will not harm you. Live—be free!"

She sprung to her feet with a joyous look.

"But Cleaveland — Colonel Cleaveland!" cried a mocking, fiendish voice, through the thick door from without.

"Curse him! curse him!" groaned the irresolute villain, relapsing into his former fury. "Ida, it must not be. You are mine, and shall be wedded to me. Cleaveland never shall claim you as his."

Ida had drawn the dagger from her bosom, and held it aloft with frightful earnestness of intent. The villain reeled back, disconcerted, amazed.

"Another time!" he muttered; "another time!" and,

without another word, he slunk back through the entrance, and swung the ponderous door behind him.

She waited till she heard the strong bolts shot back into their places—what a glad, sweet sound it now was !—and the footsteps of her retreating enemy echo far off along the floor of the outer cavern, when the sudden iron which had entered her being to support it in her hour of need, melting in the hot revulsion, she fell upon her knees, and, amid tumultuous sobs, poured forth prayers for deliverance from the danger which confronted her.

In spite of the entreaties and taunts of Judith, Heartstead immediately mounted his steed, and set out for the field, whither he had been called by the British leader, who had resolved to court a conflict then and there.

CHAPTER IX.

KING'S MOUNTAIN.

Some love to roam on the dark sea's foam,
Where the wild winds whistle free ;
But a merry band in a mountain land,
And a rifle good for me !—OLD SONG.

WE beg the reader's attention for a moment, while we set forth more fully than already has been done in the introductory chapter, the military occurrences which immediately preceded, and, in fact, were conducive to the brilliant battle which this chapter is intended to describe.

From the first dawn of the Revolution throughout the Northern colonies—from the inauguration of war at the battle of Lexington—a desultory struggle was kept up throughout the Southern colonies of Virginia, the two Carolinas and Georgia, between the patriotic fighters for liberty on one hand, and the English forces, or red-coats, as they were popularly called, on the other. These latter

were materially aided, from time to time, by those of our early population more generally known in history as Tories, who were still faithful—many, probably most of them, honestly so—to the King's cause. Some of the most interesting of the military movements which took place between these parties toward the close of the war, chiefly in the course of their respective efforts to gain possession of the State of North Carolina, will be of interest as relating to the affair at King's Mountain, in which Colonel Cleaveland,* as well as most of the Tories who have thus far figured in our story, was engaged.

Charleston, and the American army there under General Lincoln, having surrendered, as we have seen, to the British Commander, Sir Henry Clinton, who had returned to the North, leaving Lord Cornwallis behind to finish the subjugation of the Southern colonies, the latter had passed the early summer months of this year in traversing the interior counties of South Carolina; but, on the whole, to little purpose. But, the embers of patriotism, which had been, with difficulty, kept alive in that dubious State by the efforts of such noble spirits as Marion, Sumter, Pickens and others, were almost utterly extinguished, as we have seen, by the subsequent disaster to the American arms at Camden under General Gates, whose Northern laurels were fast turning to Southern willows, according to the prediction.*

* Gates was a resident of Berkley County, Virginia, and in this vicinity lived several officers of eminence in the Revolution, among them Generals Lee, Muhlenburgh, Morgan and Stephens. So great had been the success of General Gates at the North, his manœuvres having culminated in the defeat and capture of Burgoyne and his army, that he at one time rivalled even Washington in popularity; and it was with an unusual degree of confidence that Congress appointed him to succeed the unfortunate Lincoln at the South. But, about this time, Charles Lee, one of the neighbours, made a prediction that the "Northern laurels of the popular General would not be long

This unfortunate event left the State of South Carolina at the mercy of the invaders. Gates retreated to Hillsborough, in North Carolina. Cornwallis pursued, in the hope of repossessing the whole region lying south of Virginia. In this advance he commanded his main force in person, while one detachment, under the notorious Colonel Tarleton, ravaged the country nearer the sea-coast, and another, under Colonel Ferguson, proceeded through the Highlands, near the upper frontiers of the State, and across the sources of the rivers. The principal object expected of Ferguson was the rousing of the Loyalists in that remote and sparsely-settled quarter to rebel openly against the authority of Congress, and lend their aid to the British arms. While endeavouring, with considerable success, to carry out this programme, Ferguson was advised by Cornwallis of an attack about to be made by an American party of seven hundred militia, under the valorous Colonel Clarke, on the British garrison then stationed at Augusta. That garrison had, meantime, held out four days against the attack, and, at the end of that time, were relieved by Colonel Cruger, with a large force, which compelled the Americans to withdraw. Ferguson now proposed to lay in wait for the retreating Clarke, at a place called King's Mountain. But, while halting to execute this design, he heard of the approach of a new enemy—still so indefatigable were the efforts of the Patriots in watching and harassing every movement of the foe in his triumphal march. This new party was a large number of riflemen, mostly mounted, which had been drawn together under the command of Colonels Campbell, Cleaveland, Williams, Sevier, Shelby,

in turning to "Southern willows," which was afterward, in some degree, verified.

There was one thought, one hope, that blazed like a star in the gloom of Cleaveland's soul. He might meet the destroyer of his peace on the field. The red gleam of battle might reveal to him again those hateful features from which he had torn the mask on that hideous night of rapine. How his heart leapt—how he clutched the hilt of his sword at the thought of that possible meeting! The gloom of his stern lips broke into a cruel smile as that sweet hope of vengeance brightened his sorrowful breast.

It was a long ride from Valleyton to the place of contemplated battle; but by sundown of the first day nearly half the distance was accomplished, and the hardy rangers were encamped on the banks of the Cgtawba, with light hearts. The country was wonderfully beautiful in its autumnal garb; but, as night drew on, the air came down from the murky mountains in their rear, with a chilliness which made the camp-fires comfortable for the outer man. The rude fare of the riflemen was soon prepared and despatched, and they stretched themselves in their blankets for a long night's snooze. Cleaveland sat alone by the feeble embers of a camp-fire, on the bank of the running stream. He could not sleep, and sought in vain for a refuge from his haunting thoughts. The night was splendid. Everything around him was beautiful and lovely. The stars were abroad in their olden glory. The bright half-moon was rising above the poplar tops of the opposite shore, and her holy splendour rolled upon the shimmering and peaceful stream, and bathed the forms of his sleeping comrades with marvellous sweetness. Now and then the faint calls and responses of his distant pickets would come to his ear in a dreamy way, or a lonely whistle from some night-bird in the near timber

would echo out strangely on the night. Perhaps the beauty of the landscape soothed his aching heart ; but, presently, as if a sweeter balm was sent him from above, he heard the far-off dip of a boatman's oar, and, as it neared him, a melodious voice accompanied it, and came floating down the moonlit stream in a pensive song.

My boat on the clear Catawba's tide
Is drifting to the sea ;
And over the current smooth and wide
The bloomy borders be.
The bloomy banks that take the sun
All day in a blissful dream ;
And show their forms when the day is done
In the glass of the gliding stream.
And my boat is swinging, swinging slow,
With the light on her folded wings ;
And under her keel, in the crystal flow,
Her trembling shadow swings.
Oh, dear to me is the tender sweep
Of Catawba's brimming flood ;
And dear the willows that downward weep,
And the banks, in bloom or bud.
It minds me of the placid maid
Whom I loved in the long-ago,
But whose course was lost in the sombre shade
Where the Stygian waters flow.
But I know she floated, floated far,
Till the stream grew glad and bright,
Like a river of gold in a chosen star,
Or Catawba's stream to-night.
So hear me, bear me, glad and free,
Bright river with verdure lined ;
There heaves in sight the sunny sea
Where her shallop waits the wind.

As the sweet voice of the singer ebbed away, he swung into view from the shade of the overhanging willows he had sung of, and his boat drifted dreamily down the shining stream. Cleaveland watched the lonely boatman, with a feeling of envy, till he was shut from sight by a bend of the river. And then, again, as the dip of the oars was dying away, the pensive voice of the singer was heard in repetition :—

It minds me of the placid maid
Whom I loved in the long-ago,
But whose course was lost in the sombre shade
Where the darker waters flow.

But I know she floated, floated far,
Till the stream grew glad and bright,
Like a river of gold in a happy star,
Or Catawba's stream to-night.

So bear me, bear me, glad and free,
Bright river with verdure lined ;
There heaves in sight the sunny sea
Where her shallop waits the wind.

"How I envy him!" mused the gloomy colonel.
"And yet, might I not take a lesson from the boatman's
pensive song? *His* love is dead, beyond his mortal ken
and hope ; yet he knows that 'her shallop but waits the
wind' that shall bear him through eternity by her side.
My love is, in all probability, alive ; but where ?—in what
hands ? Heaven help her ! She may need it !"

He heaved a deep sigh, and relapsed into his former
mood of sombre contemplation. Presently, as if worn out
by his own harassing thoughts, he stretched himself by
the remains of the fire, and slumber at last came to his
relief.

It was probably in the dead of night when the deepest
hush presided over the sleeping camp, that a swift but
silent canoe, impelled by the stealthy paddle of an Indian,
glided out from beneath those overhanging trees above
the camp. It neared, and at length touched, the shore
without a splash, and the inmate leaped lightly to the
turf. At first he crouched close to the ground, and
made his way to the top of the bank with the
utmost caution, for the call of the distant sentinels had
made him aware of the presence of armed men. But
seeing that the camp was asleep, he raised his tall figure
to its full height, and began to examine the different
forms, as if searching for some one. Near by lay the

sleeping colonel, his face upturned to the moon, which was now almost in the zenith; and, as the keen eye of the savage rested upon him, it was evident that this was the form for which he was seeking. As noiseless as the shadow of a cloud, the Indian glided up to the prostrate sleeper, with parted lips and a haggard, anxious face. And yet he drew no knife, he detached no tomahawk from his belt, as one might have expected, had the Indian been seen; no, he only drew a little scrap of smooth white birch-bark from the pouch at his belt, and, stooping on one knee, made it fast to the colonel's coat-sleeve. Having accomplished this without arousing the sleeper, the Indian glided back to his canoe as silently as he had left it, and, in a few moments, was far down the river and out of sight.

When the shrill blare of the bugle aroused the rangers at break of day to resume their march, the colonel was amazed to find the piece of bark pinned to his sleeve. His astonishment was augmented after he had detached it and read thereon, pencilled in rude capitals, as if by the hand of an urchin at a primer-school, these words :—

"Fear not for the Lily of the Vale. She is alive and safe."
"WANDALO."

Not doubting the genuineness of this warning, as he was aware that Wandalo could read, and was, therefore, capable of the inscription on the bark, the colonel was, nevertheless, astonished to think of how the missive had been fastened to his coat. He made no mention of the circumstance to any one, however, contenting himself with sharply questioning the sentinels. Of course they knew nothing, having been posted back from the banks

of the stream, so that the colonel gradually came to the correct conclusion that it was by the river that the message had been accomplished. He had never shared in Mr. Gwin's opinion of the trustworthiness of the Indian—that is, he believed him to be in some sort of complicity with the Tories; but there was something about this warning which seemed to bear the impress of truth. He knew that, whatever of revenge and hatred Wandalo might cherish against the party who had slain his sons, his fatherly fondness for the lovely heiress of Misty Mount was genuine and profound. This led him to conclude that the savage really knew that what he had written was true. Perhaps the colonel was a little over-credulous in thus hastily imbibing comfort from the mysterious missive; but his mind was woefully depressed, and anything in the shape of hope was grateful and solacing. At any rate, it was with a much lighter heart and sunnier face than the day before that he now proceeded at the head of his troops.

Again halting on the banks of the river as night fell, this time but a few miles from the base of King's Mountain, the band were met by a courier from General Gates. By this messenger the commander received intelligence of the manner in which the red-coats were entrenched on the mountain, also a map of the region, with an order from the General, commanding him to begin the attack upon his side of the mountain at seven o'clock in the morning, when the co-operating forces, under Campbell and Sevier, would shortly afterward storm the heights from the southern slope.

They slept on their rifles, with a doubled line of pickets, and, at the first streak in the sky, were mounted and cautiously on the move.

"King's Mountain" is hardly worthy of the dignity with which its name would seem to invest it, being merely a hill of considerable elevation, the lower half of the slopes being rather lightly timbered and of easy ascent. Nevertheless, the upper portion of the mountain is exceedingly rough and steep, thickly grown with pines and firs, and affording an excellent natural defence; while the summit, being almost as flat as a table, thirty or forty acres in extent, and comparatively unwooded, forms an admirable area for the planting of guns, as well as the manœuvring of troops.

The riflemen could see the British ensign flaunting above the sharp pine-tops around the summit; and it was soon evident that the enemy had not been caught napping. For, as the rangers moved up the easy lower slopes in close order, the loud report of cannon reverberated among the crags, and a cannon-ball went whizzing over their heads.

"They'll have to shoot better than that, colonel," said Lieutenant Wilton, Cleaveland's second in command, who rode at his side.

"Perhaps they will," was the reply. "Trot out, lads," continued the colonel; and the band moved up the hill at a brisker pace.

As the order was given, another ball came hurtling over their heads, this time in much closer proximity than before; and it was evident that the red-coat gunners were getting a much better range. Indeed, pretty soon, the iron messengers came crashing through the woods at an alarming rate. One of the riflemen fell dead from his horse, and another one, badly wounded by a splinter, was unhorsed a few seconds thereafter. Then the boom of ordnance further away apprised them that the co-operat-

ing forces were, probably, ascending the mountain on its opposite side.

"Halt!" cried the sharp, clear voice of Cleaveland, as the party reached the almost impenetrable timber of the second rise of the mountain.

They halted and dismounted, tethering their animals to the trees, and forming in line, with their rifles ready.

"Look well to your flints, lads, and wait the word. We'll be the first to reach the top," cried Cleaveland.

"Forward, now!" he continued; "forward—**MARCH!**" and the gallant band moved briskly up through the trees, which, however, were so dense as to materially mar the solidity of their column.

It soon became more open, though, and, with a fierce backwoods war-whoop, the Kentuckians rushed to the summit and delivered a telling volley among the red-coats. The gunners were shot at the cannon, and the piece effectually spiked, before the enemy could recover from the suddenness of the onset. But they soon rallied with the bayonet, when the riflemen, clubbing their guns, were compelled to give way, and retired a short distance down the slope, to reload under cover of the timber. And now, the ringing cheers of Colonel Campbell's men came from the other side, followed by the simultaneous crash of their rifles, and the enemy were compelled to give the largest share of their attention to these new and more numerous assailants. They were likewise driven back at the point of the bayonet; when the third party of stormers under the lead of the brave Colonels Shelby and Williams, burst over the summit and poured in their compliments, and the surrounded British were barely in time to repulse this attack with the bayonet before Cleaveland's party were

again at the edge of the flat summit, pouring in another galling volley on their backs.

"Take to the trees, lads!" shouted Cleaveland; and in a few seconds, the riflemen seemed to have vanished in air, so quickly did they obey the order and their backwoods training, and dart into cover, behind trees, stumps, logs, and rocks, from which they kept up a desultory but effective fire.

"Huzza! There comes Campbell again!" shouted Lieutenant Wilton, from his perch in the fork of an elm-tree, and he brought up his piece to his shoulder, and let it off gleefully, as he spoke.

Sure enough, again Campbell's brave fellows broke over the summit, pouring in their deadly fire, while Shelby made his second attack almost simultaneously from another quarter.

The enemy, though vastly preponderating in numbers, could reply but poorly with their wide-shooting muskets, and relied on the bayonet. Again and again would they drive their assailants down the mountain, only to turn to a fresh party in their rear.

"Be ready, lads! be ready!" shouted Cleaveland, as Shelby's indomitable heroes appeared a third time at the top, pouring in their volley, and this time holding their own against the hitherto irresistible bayonets, with clubbed rifles, pistols, and swords.

"Break cover, and fall in line!" cried Cleaveland again, and, almost sooner than it takes to tell it, the concealed hunters were in solid column on the open ground, with but small loss so far.

"Forward—march! This time we don't break!" roared the colonel, waving his sword above his head, and the merry men sprung forward.

Crack! crack! Bang! bang! And again their pieces were unerringly discharged, while Campbell's "screamers" simultaneously appeared on the opposite side, and also held their ground against the charging bayonets.

"Club your guns, and strike 'em down!" shouted Cleaveland, as the bristling surge of bayonets rushed towards him.

In a few seconds came the shock. The regulars and Tories, led on by the gallant Ferguson, sword in hand, burst like a devastating torrent upon the heroic riflemen, who defended themselves the best way they could, giving club-blows for bayonet thrusts—falling, dying, but standing firm, while Campbell and Shelby's men came on from the opposite side, with triumphant shouts.

In a few moments an indescribable *melée* ensued; a confused mass of yelling, striking, thrusting men, with the shrill tones of command occasionally springing up an octave higher than the general roar. Cleaveland was bravely battling in the midst of the foe, when a fierce, terrible, joyous shout greeted him, and he turned to perceive the figure of Heartstead Gleason making at him through the press.

"Thank God! it has come at last!" ejaculated Cleaveland, fervently; and, answering the challenge of his foe-man with a war-cry as fierce and as deadly, he sprung toward him.

For one wild instant they hung together, their meeting blades ringing as they clashed, but a sudden eddy in the fierce tide in which they were engulfed swept them apart before a blow could be struck.

In vain did Cleaveland struggle to reach his enemy, but the smoke now hid him, and the baffled avenger bit his

lip in anger, and sought other foes. The regulars, wearied by the repeated charges they had made, were gradually losing ground, when Ferguson, frantic at the prospect of defeat, sprang at Cleaveland, pistol in one hand, sword in the other.

"Surrender ! you dastard rebel !" he shouted.

"Not this time," was the cool reply.

Crack went Ferguson's pistol. The American felt the hot ball sear his cheek, but sprang forward with waving sword. Their weapons met, and Ferguson thrust fiercely. Cleaveland received the blade of his opponent in his coat-sleeve, and, by a sudden twist of his arm, broke the weapon in two ; before the Britisher could recover, the blade of the American pierced his breast, and he fell to the ground, expiring almost instantly.

With Ferguson's fall the despair of the enemy was complete. They broke and fled in all directions. The main body, however, reached the enclosure in the centre, where their tents were situated. The victorious riflemen again formed into their separate columns, and advanced to complete their work, with deafening cheers. But they were met by a messenger requesting a parley, which was granted by Colonel Campbell, who had assumed command of the combined forces of the Americans. In a few moments, the enemy capitulated, and were immediately surrounded and disarmed by the exulting backwoodsmen and mountaineers.

So closed the battle of King's Mountain, with victory to the American arms.

The British loss was three hundred killed and wounded, besides one hundred regulars and seven hundred Loyalists or Tories taken prisoners, with two cannon and one thousand five hundred stand of arms. The American loss was

comparatively trifling in numbers, but the gallant Colonel Williams was included among the slain.

"Thus," says the historian, "was Cornwallis encountered, at the very commencement of his invading campaign, with a stinging defeat, which comprised the destruction of more than a fourth part of his army, the cutting off of all his expected supplies from the Tories of the upper country, and the advance of a large body of victorious mountaineers upon the van of his march. Under these circumstances, he felt himself compelled to retire again to Camden, with the intention of refreshing and reinforcing his army for a new attempt. He afterward moved to Winnsborough, and there awaited reinforcements, which did not reach him until the last part of October."

Cleaveland closely scrutinized the prisoners. To his great disappointment and chagrin, he found that Gleason must have been one of the few who had escaped. Confident that this man was the villain from whom the captive maiden had the most to fear, his gloomy forebodings returned to him in their full force. For, now that the villain had escaped the fatality of war, would he not return immediately to his victim? The thought was maddening in the extreme; but there was no present remedy, as it would be impossible for him to leave his command at this moment, when victory was to be improved, for a flying visit to Misty Mount.

The fight had lasted many hours, and, as night fell, the weary troops built their camp-fires on the field, while detachments were detailed to assist the surgeons in the care of the wounded and to bury the dead.

As upon the first night of his march, Cleaveland was anxious and restless, and, when most of the troops, victors

and vanquished, were reposing in the moonlight, he sat, as before, alone and despairing, by a camp-fire. Unable to control his anxiety, which every moment increased, he strolled around the plain, and at length, hardly caring whither his steps tended, he went down the mountain among the trees. The deeper gloom of the forest seemed to accord more congenially with the mood of his spirit. As he walked through the trees toward a little open glade, which he had descried, he heard the sound of other footsteps than his own, and he paused expectantly, with his hand on his sword. The footsteps came from the opposite direction, and were very near. To his utter, joyous astonishment, a human form strode into the bright moonlight of the little glade, and that form was Heartstead Gleason's !

Cleaveland unsheathed his weapon, and sprung to meet him.

"At last ! at last !" he shouted, with a terrible rapture in his tones.

Heartstead also drew his weapon. On the gloomy, haggard visage of the young Tory there also sat an expression of grim satisfaction as he faced his foe.

"This is to be to the death !" he growled. "Thank Heaven, we are alone !"

"Aye, thank Heaven, we *are* alone !" exclaimed Cleaveland ; and he crossed swords with his enemy without further preface.

It was a terrible thing, these lonely men preparing for a deadly contest, there in the profound, moonlighted solitude of that little glade in the forest. Both dexterous swordsmen, they fought for many moments in silent suspense, without either attaining any particular advantage. At length, however, Cleaveland was slightly

wounded in the hand, and retaliated by pricking his adversary in return. Then Heartstead, losing patience, rushed in desperately, and was met by a hand as steady, a temper as fierce, as his own. They closed. In the terrible struggle which ensued, Cleaveland received another and severe wound. The fight merged into a kind of desperate wrestle with their left hands, their swords playing fiercely from their right. An unlucky twig or tuft of grass caught the colonel's foot as he was manœuvring backward, and he fell heavily, the onset of the Tory being so close and impetuous that he also stumbled and fell upon his prostrate foe. Almost despairing, but gathering his remaining strength, Cleaveland was preparing for a superhuman effort to release himself and continue the contest, when he was astonished to feel his adversary still lying heavily, but almost motionless, upon him. Casting him off, he rose to his feet, when the prostrate Heartstead rolled over, his face uppermost, and a little rill of blood was spouting from a wound in his breast. He had stumbled forward with his whole weight on the point of the colonel's sword; and the contest was over. He still breathed, but it was evident that the wound was mortal, for the life-blood sprung out in fitful jets with every heave of the labouring chest. His cheek was very white, and his eyes rolled terribly, as he made a feeble motion with his hand for his adversary to draw nearer. Cleaveland knelt by the side of the dying man, and inclined his ear to catch his last words.

"Forgive—forgive me!" gasped the sufferer, with the utmost difficulty. "Ida is safe as yet—but still in danger—hid in cavern—northern side Misty Mount—half-way up. Lose not a moment! Fly to her! She is still in danger—awful danger! Judith, the fiend—the—"

The death-rattle in his throat cut short the disconnected sentence. The wounded Tory clutched the grass with his outstretched hands, gasped for breath, and fell back—a corpse.

Cleaveland arose to his feet and eyed the body of his foe with that mournful, respectful glance which is the victor's tribute to vanquished valour. There were remnants of manly beauty in the white face of the dead Tory—old, old beauty, it is true, long since depraved and almost obliterated, but a beauty which might have promised better things in better days. But such feelings as were produced in the victor by this mournful spectacle soon gave place to livelier and more important emotions.

From what he had gathered from the brief confession of the dying man, it was evident that Ida was still in imminent peril—from whom he could scarcely imagine, as he had never before heard of Judith; nevertheless his anxiety was strung to the highest pitch. He returned to the camp, to confer with his superior immediately, and, cost what it might, procure a furlough to revisit the valley.

But this ceremony was saved him by his meeting Colonel Campbell—who had been roused from his slumber by a courier from General Gates—and his being presented with an order from the Commander-in-Chief, ordering him, Cleaveland, to return with his command to Valleyton at the earliest moment, to prevent a rising of the Tory population, which was momentarily apprehended. Overjoyed at this intelligence, Cleaveland hastily narrated the duel in which he had just been engaged, with the request that the colonel would have the body of his foeman interred before leaving the mountain; which was readily granted. Cleaveland—who seemed to be proof against fatigue and sleeplessness—then

busied himself for the remainder of the night with preparations for his journey north-westward. At break of day his battle-thinned and war-worn troop of veterans were mustered for their departure at beat of drum and blast of bugle, and, after a warm parting from their brothers in arms, they proceeded down the mountain side, leaving behind them the gory field in whose conquest they had borne so honourable a part. Reaching the commencement of the second descent, where their horses were picketed, the little cavalcade—now numbering scarcely one hundred and fifty—remounted, and were soon galloping, hot haste, in the direction of Valleyton.

CHAPTER X.

JUDITH.

FLEANCE.—We will have rain anon.

1ST MURDERER.—Let it come down.

MACBETH.

AFTER Heartstead's departure from the cavern, the captive passed the time in an agony of doubt and fear as to what might be the next attempt—scarcely trusting herself to slumber, though worn out with anxiety and long vigils. The days and nights went over her in her subterranean dungeon without her knowledge. It was always night to her; whenever she looked out of her lattice, and glanced upward through the gloom of the echoing chasm, she saw the stars shining brightly. So she seemed to lose all account of the flight of time, and her terrible anxiety grew into a morbid, all-possessing fear, which seemed to be blighting her to the grave. When, overpowered, she would occasionally relapse into a fitful slumber, the least sound would arouse her, and she expected, the next instant, to hear the noisy bolts

withdrawn, and to behold the form of Heartstead. Judith entered every now and then, to bring her water and food, and to replenish the lamp with oil. She still maintained the meek, obsequious manner with which she had at first undertaken to deceive her victim; but Ida had grown to distrust her, and came to receive her attentions in gloomy silence.

Once, Judith having forgotten to bolt the door, the prisoner was filled with a vague hope that her deliverance was at hand. She waited till the steps of her gaoler had died away, and then tremblingly tried to open the massive panel. After having almost exhausted her strength in fruitless efforts, the portal at last yielded and swung open. The trembling captive shrunk back from the profound gloom by which she found herself confronted; for the door had opened into the vast inner temple of the cavern. Taking courage, however, and with a prayer to God on her lips, the maiden took the glimmering lamp which lighted her cell, and proceeded with cautious footsteps out into the gloom. The lamp was a feeble aid, but it was far better than none. She crept around the wall of the cavern, not daring to go straight across, as her imagination depicted some frightful gulf of horrors as existing somewhere in the centre of the unexplored cave. She went around by the wall, to the left of her dungeon door, and had not proceeded many yards before she noticed a small cleft in the wall of the cave. Curiously grasping the thin edge of a long, flat rock, which seemed to be loosely set against the opening, she was much surprised to find that the rock was not only light and easily handled, but that she could displace it. Setting down her lamp, she exerted herself, and drew away the thin stone, like a folding-door, and was further surprised to see revealed a

square-shaped opening in the wall of the cavern, which would easily admit a human form. Determined to explore still further, she took up her lamp, and, stooping low, made her way into the opening, when she suddenly found herself in a small sub-cavern, fully as capacious as her own cell, but apparently not lately entered, as nothing about the rude walls or ceiling bore tokens of the smoothing hand of artificial improvement. After she had retraced her steps and easily replaced the slab before the opening, she paused in thought. If she should not succeed in making her escape—if she was again immured in her dungeon, and another attempt made upon her life or honour—what an excellent thing it would be if she were only enabled to fly to this natural dungeon—of whose existence, in all probability, her captors were in ignorance—shut herself in, and bide her time for escape. But, alas! the thought of that adamantine door of her dungeon forced her to abandon her hope so soon as formed. She proceeded on her uncertain way around the great cave, and was at length again filled with hope by the appearance of a faint white glimmer, as of her long-lost daylight, which seemed to proceed from an opening a few paces in front of her. Almost satisfied that this must be the entrance proper to the cave, the trembling captive sprang toward it with a nimbler step. It was, indeed, the entrance she had guessed it to be; but, before she could take a step into it, she started back with a cry of terror; for the dark figure of Judith rose like a ghost in her path. If Ida still retained a doubt as to Judith's treachery, that doubt must have been dissipated by the dark, mocking smile that wreathed the scornful lips of the quadroom.

Without uttering a word, the latter seized her trem-

bling victim by the wrist, snatched the lamp from her hand, and almost dragged her straight across the vast chamber to her former dungeon. Thrusting the captive within the open door, and following her in, the quadroon replaced the lamp on its dangling chain. Then, suddenly grasping the other wrist of her victim, she forced her back upon the couch, and, before the terrified Ida could utter a shriek or make a struggle, the quick hand of the quadroon had taken the precious dagger from its concealment in her bosom. The unhappy victim expected, the next instant, to feel the lost weapon quivering in her heart. But Judith merely smiled again, with that dark smile of hers, stuck the captured prize in her belt, and departed without a word, clanging the heavy door to behind her, and shooting the bolts with spiteful vehemence.

Greatly terrified with what had passed, the unfortunate victim gave way to tears, believing herself as indeed lost. The iron firmness and steady courage with which she seemed to have been endowed since her capture, returned, however, ere long, to her breast, and she paced the floor of her prison, pale, but collected. Now, since her precious, heaven-sent dagger was gone, she knew not upon what to rely; and, at length, as she had done many times before, fell upon her knees, and implored the aid of her God, since by man she seemed forsaken. Much comforted, she arose, and continued her busy thoughts of escape. Her faculties were sharpened by this additional peril, and whetted by the glimpse of daylight which she had lately caught. Suddenly the thought flashed upon her, that perhaps the sub-cavern which she had discovered but a few paces from her own door, might have a natural opening into the wall of the chasm in the rear, something

in the manner of her own window. In an instant she was at the window, and sitting half-way out of it, with her lamp upraised. Could it be? Scarcely twelve inches from the side of her lattice she discovered a small hole in the side of the chasm—a very little hole indeed, but one into which she could thrust her arm to the elbow. Forgetful of the tremendous gulf that yawned beneath, with trembling eagerness she rapidly enlarged the aperture by tearing away fragment after fragment of the loose, soft rock by which she was environed. Soon an opening was made amply sufficient to admit her form; she prepared to enter her new-found sanctuary. But then, for the first time, did the thought of the hideous, unknown depths below, recur to her mind, with all its force. Commending herself to God, she set the lamp just within the opening, and commenced the perilous feat with the utmost caution. In a few seconds she was in the neighbouring cave, lamp in hand. A moment's examination convinced her that her new sanctuary was identical with the one she had discovered, and previously entered. The slab was as she had placed it over the outer entrance, but she did not remove it, knowing that another attempt to escape by the main cavern would be a fruitless and perilous task. It was enough for her, for the present, to know that she had a secret hiding-place to which to flee in her hour of need.

Much of the same sort of stone or slate, with which she had blocked up the front entrance, was lying in the cave, some of it quite loose. Detaching a large, thin slab, she propped it up against the window she had contrived, and found it to fit pretty well.

She calculated that she could escape into this cell, and shut herself in, in a little less time than it usually took

to shoot back the many bolts, and open her own dungeon door from without. She also thought that, by a glance through the key-hole of that door, she could make herself aware of the character and intention of the person about to enter, and immediately, in case of need, beat a mysterious retreat. Wonderfully elated at her new discovery, the maiden took down the slab from the chasm-opening, and returned through her own lattice with her lamp in her hand.

But she was not contented until she had made many successive trips from one cave to the other, in order to make herself accustomed to the sensation of the deep chasm beneath her feet, and to increase her nimbleness in making the transit.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESCUE.

UPON the third morning which succeeded the battle of King's Mountain, Judith was standing just within the outer entrance of the great cave, when the lofty figure of the Indian chief appeared before her from without. He was frightfully emaciated; a great fever was burning in his eyes, and he seemed to come from a long journey, his garments were so torn and soiled.

"Wandalo is obedient to the Passion-Flower," he said, humbly, and in strangely hollow tones.

"Yes, you are indeed true, my glorious lover!" exclaimed Judith. "But what do you bring? You were at the battle?"

He pointed to a bloody bandage on his arm by way of answer.

"But Heartstead—where is he?"

"The trampler of the Lily is before the throne of the Great Gardener."

"What mean you?"

"He is dead."

A fierce exclamation broke from the lips of the quadroon at this intelligence. In a few hurried words, Wandalo related the occurrences of the battle—the fight, the British defeat, and the midnight duel, to which he had been a witness.

"The lightnings kill you! Why didn't you aid the Tory?" cried Judith, wrathfully.

"When two braves are equally pitted, breast to breast, the Thunder-Mocker does not cast his power in either scale," was the proud reply.

"Forgive my anger, Wandalo! Besides, you could not aid, if he died in the moment of apparent victory."

She leaned her head a moment on her hand, as if lost in thought.

"The moment is near—very near, Wandalo," she said.

He looked at her inquiringly.

"The moment when we two shall take to the distant mountains," she added.

He sprung forward and embraced her with trembling tenderness.

"Come, my Passion-Flower, come; let us go at once," he cried. "Joy shall come upon us from the clouds; we will wither together in the distant dingles. Come, let us go. What! and the sweet Lily is to be left in her whiteness?"

"Yea; in her whiteness, but not in her bloom," was the sombre reply. "Wandalo, wait till I return."

"Stay; why do you leave me?" he cried, as she turned into the cavern.

"To pluck the Lily from her stalk," said Judith, with a terrible smile, at the same time touching the bright dagger in her belt, with a menacing glance.

"You will not slay her? You—"

A low laugh, that made him shiver to his heart, was her only answer. The Indian fell upon his knees in an agony of supplication.

"Judith, my Passion-Flower, my wild, fierce Queen!" he moaned, "spare her—spare her!"

"Never!" cried the stormy woman, her whole figure quivering in the awful wrath that possessed her. "Never! One doom she has escaped; but there is always time to kill—to kill!"

"Nay, but why the knife?" exclaimed the savage, hoping to gain delay; why the knife, my Passion-Flower? Starvation, poison—"

"It shall not be. These hands shall let out the life of her she hates. There is no time for slower means—our cavern is no longer a secret. Wandalo, await me here. Be sure you do not follow."

He stood as if rooted to the spot, and she passed on.

Taking a small lamp from a cleft in the wall, she lighted it and passed straight forward toward the door of her victim's cell. But when she had reached the centre of the great chamber, she wheeled suddenly round and confronted Wandalo, who was stealthily following her.

"Begone!" she cried fiercely.

The Indian did not stir; it was evident that her power over him was in danger.

Slowly she raised her hand, her eyes blazing with the still malignity of an angry pythoness.

"Begone!" she hissed, flinging him away with a repelling gesture, but not touching him.

Wandalo disappeared like a shadow, and with a smile of conscious triumph the woman proceeded to the prisoner's cell with stealthy steps. She put her ear to the door—there was no sound, and she chuckled to herself to think that her victim was asleep.

Swiftly drawing the bolts, Judith, holding her lamp in her left hand and her dagger in her right, burst into the apartment.

It was empty.

With a hoarse cry, she sprung into the room. The window was open—the bird had flown.

Whither?

She sprung upon the sill of the lattice; but the loud echo of many feet entering the main cavern recalled her to her usual caution. Instantly blowing out her lamp, she crept back into the great chamber and listened. Tramp! tramp! came the tread of armed men. And then she saw them bringing in torches. She knew of a secret chamber not far off, in which she hastily concealed herself, just before the entire cavern became brilliantly illuminated from the torches which were being brought in.

"That must be the prison!" exclaimed old Godfrey, who was in advance of the soldiers, at the same time pointing to the open door of the dungeon.

"Forward—march!" cried Cleaveland, who was immediately behind him, and the troop wheeled across the great chamber, followed by the torch-bearers.

And now Judith, who watched from her hiding-place, saw a sight which made her teeth meet through her nether lip, with suppressed rage.

Just as the foremost of the band of rescuers were within a dozen yards or so of the cell, what appeared to

be a fragment of the wall of the chamber fell out with a loud clang, and Ida tottered out of the solid rock, and swooned at her father's feet.

The joy with which that anxious father gathered his long-lost child to his arms, the emotions of her soldier-lover, the wild shouts of honest exultation that rose from the throng of neighbours and soldiers, may be imagined, but not adequately described. Water was hastily sprinkled over the fainting girl. She slowly revived, but still clung to her father with feeble strength. But in the midst of this joy, while the old man bent tenderly over his child, a hideous apparition startled the spectators.

Judith, unable any longer to control her ferocious spite, suddenly leaped from her hiding-place, near which the old man and his daughter were leaning, and raised her dagger to plunge it into Ida's breast.

So unexpected was this manoeuvre, so ghostly the appearance of the quadroon, that every one, for an instant, seemed petrified with horror. But Cleaveland, the first to recover, struck the uplifted arm with the scabbard of his sword, before mischief could be effected, and, grasping Judith, hurled her far away from her innocent victim. Seeing herself foiled, the quadroon did not attempt an escape from the cavern, but sprang upon a little ledge in the wall, and, clambering cat-like, with her dagger in her teeth, gained a foothold far above their heads.

"Woman, surrender yourself immediately !" exclaimed the colonel.

"I will not."

"Sergeant Downing," said the colonel, turning quietly to one of his men, "enforce the surrender of that woman."

The sergeant touched his cap respectfully, stepped briskly out from among his comrades, and confronted the scornful and inaccessible quadroom.

"I will ask you to surrender three times," said the sergeant; "if you refuse, or deign no answer to the last question, I will shoot you."

"One question will be quite sufficient," said Judith.

The sergeant made no answer, but quietly cocked his rifle, primed, and brought the butt to his shoulder, with the muzzle pointed at her.

"*Once*—surrender!" he exclaimed.

She made no answer.

"*Twice*—surrender!"

No answer.

After a long interval:

"*Thrice*—surrender!"

No answer.

The threatening gun was kept upraised for a long time, and then lowered without being discharged.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the mocking woman, in derision.

"Unhappy being!" exclaimed Cleaveland, with horror, and yet with an unconscious admiration of her bravery, "what motive could you have to attempt the life of this innocent maiden?"

"Ask him!" she cried, pointing to old Godfrey, who averted his face.

"I know nothing that could prompt such a hellish deed as this," he murmured.

"You lie!" yelled Judith, from her rocky perch. "Who destroyed my mother?—Your sire! Who destroyed me? Who made me what I am?—You and your brother, Rupert! Oh! did you think my

vengeance would ever sleep? I made old Gleason, my purchaser, follow you hither, for I wanted to be near the man who made me a slave! The grass is not yet green over your son's corpse. It was through my influence that Wandalo shot him dead from the distant thicket, while he was sunning himself on your porch. It was I who hounded on Heartstead to carry off your Ida. I had a double doom for her. I was to kill her twice—in her happiness and in her life. The death of my instrument, Heartstead, prevented the former—you have torn her from the latter fate. I was in her room to take her life, when her absence and your entrance saved her. Farewell! my spirit will not brook a failure. You ask me to surrender; see, I do so, but not to you!"

As she spoke, she raised the glittering dagger with a strong, steady hand, and plunged it to the hilt into her own heart. She tottered for a moment on the edge of the high shelf, reeled, caught at the air with her hands, and pitched down on the rocky pavement, as dead as any of the loosened fragments of the wall that came rattling down after her.

There was not a man of that hardy assemblage who did not shudder at what he had heard and seen. Fortunately, Ida had again fainted when threatened by the monster, so that she, at least, escaped the horrible recital and spectacle. Mr. Gwin now lost no time in bearing her out of the cavern, followed by one of his servants; but a strange atmosphere of horror kept the remainder of the party glued to the spot, eyeing each other in blank amazement. While standing thus they were startled by a wild, savage war-whoop, and Wandalo stood before them.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, dancing up to the party.

"Ha! ha! Wandalo not got long to wait. Soon going down—down to the bottom of Misty Mountain. Whoop!"

His eyes were fixed upon the lifeless body of the quadroon. He did not pause, but gathered up the mangled body in his arms, as lightly as a feather's weight, and continued his wild dance.

"The Passion-Flower has gone to sleep. I'll take her down to the bottom of the mountain. Sweet place down at the bottom of the mountain—down in the heart of the Misty Mountain!"

He skipped out of the cave with the body in his arms, followed by the wondering throng. They saw him scale the steep sides—up and up—still holding the body, as if it was that of a little baby, wondering what would come next. At last they reached the fissure or gulf which Ida had noticed as running down through the lofty ridge at the back of the cave. It only averaged a width of about twelve or fifteen feet, ran irregularly up the steep, in some places almost concealed, but was evidently of awful depth. Far up the mountain they beheld Wandalo, dancing with his burden on the edge of this fearful gulf.

"Ha! ha! We're going down!" he laughed. "Lilies don't grow there—only Passion-Flowers—bright, fierce Passion-Flowers! Ha! ha! We'll go down to the bottom of the mountain—down to the heart of the Misty Mountain!"

He sprang from the edge with the quadroon's corpse in his arms, and disappeared. One more wild laugh they heard, and all was silent. The party looked at each other in speechless horror. But, at length, as they turned to descend the mountain, one of the riflemen loosened a great fragment from the edge of the gulf. All paused to listen.

Boom ! boom ! clang ! clang ! crick ! crick ! went the tumbling mass, the sound dying from a loud thunder to something like the tick of a watch, and then gradually melting away into silence. Then the party began to descend the mountain.

That was a deep, deep tomb for Wandalo and Judith !

CHAPTER XII.

WINNING THE HEIRESS.

Two months after the events which have just been recorded, in the early portion of December, Cleaveland again found himself in the vicinity of Valleyton, he having been summoned away from that locality only a day or two after the recovery of Ida Gwin. He had never as yet dared to breathe his love in her ear—indeed, little time had been afforded him since her rescue.

But now he approached the lovely valley again, under fairer auspices than ever before. It is true he was not without that natural diffidence which most lovers of refinement must experience as they approach that embarrassing period which is vulgarly called “popping the question ;” but almost everything bore a brighter aspect now.

He was without the harassing cares, with regard to the condition of his country, which had formerly weighed so heavily upon the spirits of all true patriots. Certainly the war was not yet over ; but then a stage was reached whence, it seemed, could be discerned “the beginning of the end.” Gates, who, as we have seen, had lost something of the high reputation which he had gained in the conquest of Burgoyne, had just been superseded in the command of the Southern army by the brilliant and popular General Greene. Cornwallis had not yet re-

covered from the disastrous effects of his compulsory retreat southward after the battle of King's Mountain—although large reinforcements were now reaching him—and was bungling forward in his new campaign, which was soon to have a stinging check at the battle of the Cowpens and with Morgan's victory. In fact, the old year was going out finely, with every prospect that American victory would inaugurate the new—at least in the long-overrun, long-suffering Southern Colonies.

Then, while Cleaveland had been away, he had received several glowing, friendly letters from old Godfrey Gwin, and one sweet little pink-tinted treasure of an epistle from Ida, breathing the very spirit of gratitude and warm friendship for him, which he had ever since worn in his bosom. He had also received news that the last of the denizens of the valley who could revive the recollection to contemplate anew those horrible tragedies of the mountain to which he had been a witness, was now no longer of the living. This was old Jacob Gleason, who had at last, burdened with many crimes and the incessant anxiety entailed upon him by his ill-gotten wealth, perished in self-compelled indigence and misery.

So that it was with a far lighter heart than formerly that Cleaveland found himself cantering over the well-known road from Valleyton to Misty Mount with two months' furlough at his disposal. And there he saw the noble old host waiting to welcome him from the porch of his hospitable mansion. In a few moments the colonel had alighted and his hand was in the grasp of Mr. Gwin.

Ida came tripping out at the sound of horses' feet. She at first coloured up at the sight of the colonel, but immediately advanced and accorded a frank hand and a warm welcome.

Perhaps her cheek was a trifle thinner—her beauty a trifle more subdued, than when she was first introduced to our readers; but two months was a short time for such a delicate being to overcome the effects of that terrible experience in the Tories' cave. And Cleaveland, at any rate, thought her beauty holier, lovelier, tenderer than it had ever before appeared.

"And how is *mon amie*?" he inquired, gaily taking her little hand in his own.

"*Assez bien; et Monsieur le colonel?*" she replied, demurely.

"In perfect health," said he, laughing. "I propose a return to the mother tongue. I have no intention of showing the poverty of my *patois* alongside of the pretty French of Mademoiselle Ida."

"As you will, colonel."

As he passed upstairs to his baggage, which had arrived before him, he could not help thinking that she was a little cool toward him, and immediately began to grow miserable. But his buoyant hopes returned when her happy smile greeted him upon his descent to dinner.

Well, they fell back into their old delightful ways; rides and rambles by day-time, whist, the piano, reading and singing by night: and it seemed more than likely that half of the gallant colonel's furlough would be frittered away before he mustered courage to read his fate in the blue eyes of that simple maiden.

But one day, at about noon, seeking for Ida to take a walk, he found that she had gone out alone, and thereupon took his hat and cane to go in search of her. It was almost in the middle of December, but the day was sunshiny and quite warm. The earth, it is true, had lost something of the splendour in which he had seen her in

her mid-autumn robes ; but there was something soothingly sweet in the soberness which had come upon her in the soft winter of her age.

The colonel was so fortunate as to find the object of his quest in a little summer-house a short distance from the mansion. He approached her with a laughing remonstrance at her having endeavoured to shake off his "cumbersome society," as he called it. She protested her innocence so earnestly that he was sorry at having reproved her, even in jest.

He sat down by her side in the little bower.

"Do you not sometimes grow sad in the winter?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied ; "it is not so sweet as the gay months."

"I think sweeter," said he.

"Pray why?"

"The spring is gay and lively," said the pensive colonel, "the summer magnificent, the autumn grand. But I find a sweetness in the gentle solemnity of our southern winter which is dearer to me than all the rest. Perhaps it is in accordance with my own nature, which has mostly been somewhat lonesome and sad."

"I should think," said she looking straight before her, "that it would have been somewhat otherwise with one so gifted as you. You have everything calculated to make new friends and endear old ones—position—courtesy—genius."

"You flatter me, pretty one ; what do you know of my having genius?" said he, laughing.

"Oh, I am sure you have. I—" she paused, and said no more.

"Well, suppose your conjecture true. What to me

are these advantages, if they are unable to procure for me that which I most crave?"

"What can that be?"

"Sympathy—love."

She thought of the miniature which Jenny had seen around his neck, and merely said, with downcast eyes:

"I should think that this was not so difficult to attain."

As she said this, he hesitated, then took her hand in his. She trembled a little, as if about to withdraw it, but, nevertheless, let it remain where it was.

"Ida!" said Cleaveland, with deep emotion, and she trembled again, for she had never before heard him address her by her first name. "Ida!" repeated the colonel, softly, "it would, indeed, give me a wonderful and enduring gladness, could I be persuaded that my love may be attained."

She still held her eyes cast down, and was silent.

"Ida, I must speak boldly at last, and meet my fate, whatever that may be," he continued; "I love you—passionately, utterly—as much, I believe, as it is in the power of man to love."

Still she was silent, but red and pale by turns.

"Speak to me, Ida," he murmured, pressing her hand strongly, "speak, and let me know my fate!"

Then, as she turned to him, and laid her head upon his shoulder, he caught her to his breast with a glad, wild impulse, and their lips clung together in a first, long, passionate kiss. A new era began to bloom through her life as she lay there folded in his warm caress, and he—his thirty years were melting back to his childhood, his old boy-dreams were become realized, his life was blazing with the new lustre.

"My own! My one, bright darling!" he murmured.
"And you really love me? I do not dream?"

"I loved you the first time I saw you," she said, with a deep blush, and again he pressed his hungry lips to hers.

"And yet," she at length said, looking up with an arch smile, "I was at one time very—very jealous."

"Of what, *mon amie*?" he asked, with an air of the most perfect innocence.

"Of the original of your miniature," she replied.

"And how did you know that I had a miniature, pray?"

"Jenny told me. She saw it one morning."

"Here it is, my darling," said Cleaveland, taking the jewelled picture from his breast and laying it before her. "Do you see anything in it to be jealous of now?"

"Yes," she said, with a pretty pout; "for it is far more lovely than I."

"That is not truth, my love; but look again, and carefully. Are you still jealous?"

"Upon the whole, it looks something like yourself," she replied, evasively.

"Yes," said Cleaveland, with emotion; "and even you, Ida, could not take this miniature from me; for it is the portrait of one who must, at this moment, be smiling down upon you and me—my mother in heaven! She died when I was but a child."

Ida felt a warm tear fall upon her cheek as he uttered the last words. She looked up quickly, twined her arms about his neck, and kissed him tenderly, unblushingly.

Then the miniature was restored to its place in his bosom, and pretty soon the happy lovers were smiling and chatting as gaily as before. Presently they heard

the dinner-bell from the house, and they sauntered homeward, arm-in-arm.

"Something's been going on between two young people of my acquaintance," said old Godfrey Gwin, as they entered the drawing-room, and he immediately put on a very severe expression of countenance.

"Now, pa, don't!" said Ida, running up to him, putting her arms around his neck, and hiding her blushes in his great shirt-ruffle.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the savage parent, kissing her. "It's all right, my girl, and nothing to be ashamed of. How are you, Cleaveland, my boy? We'll crack an extra bottle of port for dinner to-day!" And he shook the colonel's hand heartily, and led the way to dinner.

Well, to shorten an already too long story, before another month had flown there was a gay wedding at the mansion, whereat Henry Cleaveland, a soldier of fortune, but a rising chief on the winning side, was united for life to Miss Ida Gwin, the fairest girl in America, and the Heiress of Misty Mount.

THE END.

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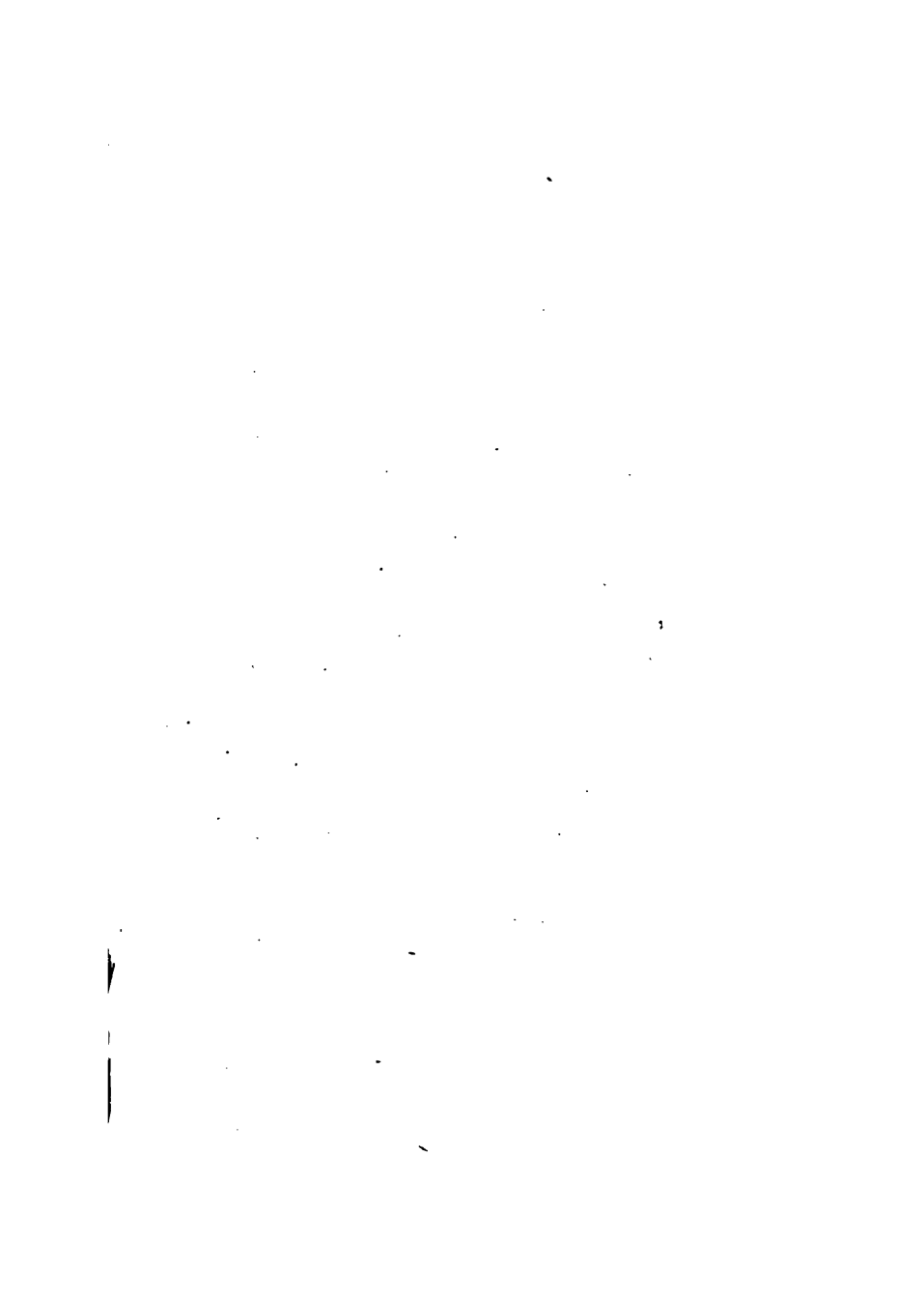
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THE

PRISONER OF THE MILL;

OR,

Captain Hayward's "Body Guard."

By LIEUT.-COLONEL HAZELTINE,

AUTHOR OF "THE BORDER SPY."

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1866.



THE PRISONER OF THE MILL.

CHAPTER I.

BROTHER AND SISTER—FOREBODINGS—NETTLETON.

WAR ! Oh ! how much of misery is expressed in that one word ! It tells its own tale of woe, of blood, of broken hearts and desolated homes, of hopes blighted, of poverty and crime, of plunder, speculation, and official tyranny, of murder and sudden death. In short, it develops all the baser passions of the human heart, changing a peaceful world to a world of woe, over which the angels well might weep.

Come, O thou angel, Peace !

The "Army of the Mississippi," as it was termed, had been unsuccessful in their pursuit of the rebel General Price. A portion of it, or rather the division commanded by General Sigel, had advanced from Springfield, Missouri, upon the Wilson creek road, as far as the famous battle-ground rendered immortal by the death of General Lyon, but finding no enemy, it had encamped upon Grand Prairie, a few miles to the west of the bloody field. All in camp was upon the "tip-toe of expectation." The lovely scene spread out before the view was sufficient to inspire the heart of man to great and glorious deeds. The broad, rolling prairie lay there, like heaven's great carpet. The long grass waved in the breeze, presenting the appearance of a deep-green sea, undulating in low swells, as if Queen Mab's wand were

wafting over it ; the autumn's frost had changed thousands of the delicate emerald blades to purple, yellow, and scarlet, while, intermixed with these, was the white prairie flower, lending to the scene an almost fairy-like aspect. The large "Fremont" tents were arranged in rows, in a tasty manner ; flags were flying ; bands were discoursing sweet strains, which echoed far and wide ; squads of soldiers, in vari-coloured uniforms, were lounging lazily on the grass, while those detailed for mess or guard duty, were busily prosecuting their assigned tasks. To the east of the camp appeared a wall of forest-kings, their verdure, also touched by the frost, presenting a variety of colours, and glistening in the sunlight.

Few in that small army had witnessed the horrors of the battle-field ; but, like all "green" troops, conceiving that there was much of romance connected with the deadly field, and that heroes were created by a single brave deed, the mass of Sigel's men were eager to meet the foe. It had been given out that the entire army was to join this division on the prairies, and that an advance was to be made at once against Price, who was then at Cassville, some forty miles distant to the southward.

"I think we can safely count upon a desperate battle by the day after to-morrow," exclaimed one of a party of five, seated within a captain's tent—four of whom were at a table, with cups and wine before them. The fifth person was making himself generally useful, acting in the capacity of a servant.

"You have fleshed your maiden sword at Springfield, and I did not suppose you would be anxious for another fight. I confess I cannot gaze upon such scenes without a shudder, and, if duty would permit, I would willingly sheathe my sword for ever."

"Captain Hayward, you are low-spirited to-day," answered the first speaker.

"I am, indeed, Lieutenant Wells. And can you wonder? My sister is here!"

"I only wish mine was!"

"That is a rash wish, my friend. She would be exposed to much danger, and I never want mine to gaze upon a battle-field. No! when men cut each other's throats, delicate, sensitive women should not be near!"

"Could you find no way in which to send her from Springfield to St. Louis?" asked Wells.

"I could have done so by the mail coach, but, you know, the entire distance of one hundred and thirty miles, from Springfield to Rolla, or to Tipton upon the other route, is infested with guerillas, and I feared to send her. I preferred she should brave the dangers of the camp or even the battle-field with me."

Captain Hayward bent his head upon his hands and was silent. It was some moments before any one ventured to speak. All appeared to be oppressed with a strange sadness. At length one of the party, Captain Gilbert, slapping him familiarly upon the shoulder, and endeavouring to speak gaily, said:—

"Come, come, Harry, this won't do! you must shake off every vestige of blues. You are suffering still from the wound you received in the Warsaw skirmish, and it makes you low-spirited. No doubt your sister will be perfectly safe, and I know she had much rather be with you, to assist you should you need her aid, than to be safe in St. Louis, enduring the tortures of suspense."

Hayward made no reply. At this moment, a female, delicate and fair, came tripping lightly into the tent, her face wreathed in smiles, and her eyes sparkling with de-

light ; but, as she caught sight of Hayward, she paused, and gazed upon him for a moment, exhibiting the most intense interest ; then advancing, and placing her hand upon his shoulder, she spoke :—

“ Brother ! ”

Hayward started, and, clasping her in his arms, he pressed her close to his heart for a moment. But, gazing into his eyes, she asked :—

“ What is the matter, dear Harry ? you appear ill ! ”

The countenance of Hayward underwent an instant change, as he replied :—

“ Not ill, but somewhat depressed in spirits, perhaps in view of what a day may bring forth.”

“ Oh ! Harry,” she said, “ I hear there is going to be another fight. Will you have to go into it, and leave me ? ”

“ Should there be a battle, I shall endeavour to protect you, dear sister.”

“ But, you will be in danger ; perhaps wounded—perhaps killed ! Oh ! what would I do then ? Don’t go, Harry ! ” and the gentle girl threw her arms around her brother’s neck and wept. After a moment he raised her, and pressing his lips to her forehead, said :—

“ I wish to speak with these gentlemen a moment. Go to your friend Alibamo’s tent. I will come back for you soon ! ” The sister cast back a look of fond solicitude, and left the tent.

Hayward gazed after her a moment, muttering audibly :

“ Poor child, what ~~would~~ you do if I should fall. You would then, indeed, be alone ! ”

“ Now, captain, I don’t think that’s half fair,” exclaimed the one spoken of as being the servant. “ Do you think I am such a darn skunk as—if you was killed—

the darn—not to fight for my capt'n's sister—the skunk—no, I mean, if you die—if she—darn me, if I don't—I—I—” and the speaker, as if unable to express what he did mean, suddenly left the tent. All present smiled broadly, and good humour was thus, for the moment, infused in all hearts.

“Nettleton had a sudden call!” said one.

“He has gone to the sutler for a dictionary!” added another.

“His heart is in the right place,” remarked Hayward.

“That's so!” responded all, with emphasis.

“You are safe, with such a ‘darn skunk’ for your body-guard, Captain Hayward,” Gilbert declared, with comic seriousness.

William Nettleton was in height about six feet. His general appearance was very singular. His hair was nearly white—naturally so; his eyes of a light green and large; his carriage very loose—indeed, when he walked, one would expect to see him fall in pieces. His feet were huge in dimension. He had the appearance of a half-witted, ill-formed person; but he was, withal, neither one or the other. Having been detached from the company to which he belonged to act as servant to Captain Hayward, he soon became so greatly attached and devoted to the captain as to be styled his “body-guard.” This attachment was not fictitious, nor did it proceed from a spirit of military sycophancy or subserviency; it was felt. Nettleton had evinced more than ordinary courage on several occasions, and had, also, displayed so much judgment with his intrepidity, that he had received offers of advancement; but these he declined, preferring, as he expressed himself, “to stay with my capt'n, the first what promoted me.”

It will also be well to explain the presence of ladies in the camp. Miss Mamie Hayward was the sister of Captain Hayward, who, having received intelligence that her brother was wounded, had visited Springfield for the purpose of ministering to his wants. At the time of her arrival, Fremont's "Army of the Mississippi" was marching upon that place, and the journey from Rolla or Tipton was safe. But soon those roads were infested with guerillas, and, as they were poorly guarded, it was not thought prudent that the ladies who had reached Springfield should attempt a return. Miss Hayward, therefore, remained with her brother. This same reason will apply to all the ladies in camp, of which there were several—conspicuous among whom was the wife of Adjutant Hinton, one of the officers of the well-known "Benton Cadets." She was usually addressed as "Alibamo"—her name when a captive in Price's hands. She was very beautiful, and of that daring, determined nature which has immortalized so many women of the West. In company with Alibamo was a young lady, who acted in the capacity of waiting-maid, but who really appeared more like a companion. This female possessed the not particularly euphonious name of Sally Long.

"I must join with Nettleton in my reproaches, Captain Hayward," answered Lieutenant Wells, in a subdued tone. "You forgot my conversation with you last night!"

"No, Wells. You informed me of your affection for my sister, but you have never addressed her as a lover. How do you know that she will return your love? If she could return it, I confess, lieutenant, I do not know any one to whom I would more willingly see her united; but, if she cannot, how could you assume to become her protector?"

"If such should be the case, and the fortunes of war should deprive her of a brother, rest assured that, not only myself, but every man in camp, would willingly shed his blood in her defence, and care for her as a sister?"

"Thank you. I do feel a foreboding of evil. I believe I shall be killed in the coming battle. If this should be the case, I commend her to your care. But my nerves are excited. I will walk into the open air. No! I would be alone!" he added, as one of the officers arose as if to accompany him.

As he left the tent, one of the party, a Captain Walker, exclaimed:—

"Well, I hope things are all right, but I have my doubts!"

"Your doubts of what?" asked Wells.

"Humph! well, no matter. *You* are too directly interested to listen to the explanation. But perhaps you will find out some day."

"Do you intend, sir, to cast any slur upon Captain Hayward?"

Captain Walker did not reply, but left the tent. An hour or more had passed, and Hayward did not return. It was now quite dark, when suddenly the assembly was sounded, and, all anxious, the troops fell in. The order was read:—

"Pack knapsacks, and have everything in readiness for a move at daylight."

All was excitement, and every preparation was made for a forward movement. But soon it began to be whispered that the orders were to return. In a short time it was officially announced that the movement was, in reality, *back to Springfield*, and from thence to Rolla and St.

Louis. Many were the expressions of disappointment and regret, and some even ventured to denounce the policy. Fremont had been superseded in the field, and General Hunter, his successor, had abandoned the campaign, then on the very eve of its final consummation.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE STREAM—WHO WAS GUILTY ?

WHEN Captain Hayward left the tent, he proceeded to the stream which skirted the woods. Bending over it, he bathed his fevered brow. Then he seated himself upon the bank of the river, and, resting his head upon his hands, was for a long time absorbed in his thoughts. A human form flitted lightly past. Hayward raised his head and listened, but all was quiet again, and, in the darkness of the night, he could distinguish nothing.

"I was mistaken !" he said to himself. "If I was not, and a human being is around, I will wager it was Nettleton, who, anxious for my safety, has followed me."

The captain was again silent for a moment, when the breaking of a twig betrayed the presence of some person. Hayward raised his head and called :—

"William ! William Nettleton !"

"Sir !" answered a voice but a few feet from the captain.

"Why did you follow me, William ?"

"Cos I'm a darn skunk," drawled the person addressed, as he emerged from out of the darkness. "And——*Curse you !*"

The person speaking was before him. In an instant Hayward sprung to his feet, but, with a cry of agony, exclaimed : "Great God, Nettleton—why have you—O God, save me—you've killed me—I die !" And falling heavily forward, the words died upon his tongue.

The murderer bent over the murdered for a moment ; then, with some haste, rolled the body into the water, and turned from the spot. He paused under the shade of a tree, and listened for the tread of a sentry, that he might enter the camp unobserved. With a half-suppressed laugh he uttered his thoughts :—

“I have done it, sure ; and now that it is done, I must progress—no retreating now. I think I’ll win. Good-bye, captain, and give my respects to my friends as you float down-stream.”

He proceeded with caution toward the camp, and was soon lost in the city of canvas.

The tattoo soon sounded. Lights were extinguished, and all was quiet, save in a few tents, which appeared to be those of officers. Yet, there were aching hearts within that camp, and, as the night progressed, many were the anxious inquiries as to why Captain Hayward did not return.

In a large tent, near that occupied by Captain Hayward, were seated three ladies. One was Miss Hayward ; another was Alibamo, or, as she is now a wife, she should be called Mrs. Adjutant Hinton ; the other was Miss Sally Long, the waiting-maid of Alibamo. Before this tent paced a special guard ; beside it was a tent of much smaller dimensions, occupied by Nettleton and *his* servant, black George, or, as Nettleton used to call him, “Swasey’s nigger.”

“I fear something has befallen my brother. He does not return, and it is now twelve o’clock !”

“Don’t be alarmed,” said Alibamo, in a soothing voice ; “your brother is most likely at the head-quarters of General Sigel. He may be detained on business. Come, let us retire.”

"No, not while my brother is absent."

At this moment the guard came to the tent entrance and said :—

"Ladies, if you have not yet retired, Captain Walker requests the pleasure of a few words with Miss Hayward."

"Oh, Alibamo, I fear that man ; he looks at me so strangely. But perhaps he brings news of my brother. I will see him. Bid the captain enter."

As Walker entered he appeared agitated, but controlling his emotions, he said :—

"Ladies, you will pray excuse me. I feel that I must speak now, as it may be my last opportunity. We—or, I should say the army—will be separated at Springfield, and I shall see you no more."

"Do you bring news of my brother?" asked Miss Hayward.

"No ! His disappearance is very strange. But I came to speak of myself."

"What would you say?"

"This, Miss Hayward. I have loved you long and dearly. To-morrow we may be parted, and I would ask you, should the fortunes, or rather misfortunes, of war deprive you of a brother's love and protection, will you not permit me to seek you out and become your future protector?"

"Captain Walker, these words surprise me, and I think propriety demanded that they should have been spoken in the presence of my brother."

"Pardon me, dear lady. I have waited until this hour for your brother's return, and at last, fearing I should have no other opportunity, I ventured to visit you now. You have a friend and sister in Alibamo, and surely you will not fear to speak before her."

"I cannot answer your question—it refers to the future."

"Then for the present. Let me speak plainly, and I beg you will do the same. Can you not at least regard me now as your friend and protector, and give me a friend's privileges?"

The timid girl turned toward Alibamo, and in an inaudible voice, spoke a word.

"She answers promptly, no!" replied Alibamo, somewhat sterner than was her usual manner.

"You love another then?" asked Walker.

Miss Hayward did not reply.

"Is the favoured one Lieutenant Wells?" again asked Walker.

"You are impertinent, Captain Walker," replied Alibamo. "I must request you to retire. How can you, in her brother's absence, address her in this manner?"

At this moment there was a commotion in the tent of Nettleton. The voice of the negro was heard exclaiming:—

"I her'd you, massa Nettleton. There ain't no use in you denyin' it. I he'd massa cap'n say, 'Oh Nettleton, ye kill me!' Oh Lord, if eber I get out ob dis scrape, ye'll neber catch dis chile in such another one."

"Is the nigger crazy? What is the darn skunk talking about?"

"Oh, you needn't make b'lieve ignoramus on dis 'ere question. I he'd ye."

"Now, look a here, you unconscionable dark; if you have got anything to say, spit it out. Don't make a darn skunk of yourself."

"Oh! won't I fotch ye up in the morning? Yes, sah!"

"Are you going to speak and say what you mean?"

"Oh, golly! You go back on de cap'n dat way!"

"What cap'n? Out with it, or I'll break your head and every bone in your body," exclaimed Nettleton, in a state of undisguised excitement.

"Serve dis nigger as ye did de cap'n, and den put his body in de riber!"

The negro had scarcely uttered these words when Nettleton seized him. He set up a terrible howl, which brought Captain Walker to their tent.

"What is all this fuss about?" asked Walker.

The negro went on to explain as follows:—

"Why, ye see, massa cap'n, I went ober to dat yar house across the riber, to see Miss Julia, a col'd gal dat used to be my sweatheart. Well, I see'd de Johnnies comin', and I run down to de riber to come on dis side, but dey come so close to me, dat dis chile hid behind a big log. Den dey stop right by me, and say, 'Golly, we can't cotch nobody.' Den I her'd some one on de oder side ob de riber say, 'Oh, Nettleton, you—'."

"Silence this stuff! You have been drunk. If you speak upon this subject again, I'll cut your black throat."

"I'se dumb, massa cap'n."

Quiet had now been restored, and all parties retired for the few hours that intervened before morning. But it was evident all were not asleep. Several times a stealthy step was heard, and a shadow flitted mysteriously past the white canvas tent, dimly seen by the pale starlight.

Morning came at last, and all was astir. Captain Hayward had not yet returned. The inquiry was made if any one had seen him.

"I have not seen him since last evening at twilight," replied Walker, "at which time he acted very strangely,

and talked about the injustice of war. I am inclined to think he has deserted and joined the enemy."

"Oh, you darn skunk!" yelled Nettleton, as he sprung forward, and was about to strike the speaker. But, checking himself, he added: "It's well you wear them gilt things on your shoulders, or I'd teach you to call my cap'n such names."

"If you would save yourself trouble, you had better remain quiet, Nettleton," replied Walker, as he fixed his eyes significantly upon him.

"I knows where Cap'n Hayward am," said the negro.

"Where is he?" sobbed Miss Hayward, pressing forward, in her eagerness.

"He is—"

"Silence!" yelled Walker.

"Let him speak," said the colonel. "Go on, George. Where is the captain?"

"Down dar!" The negro trembled violently, and glanced at Nettleton.

"What do you mean?"

"He's in de riber—killed dead, sure!"

A wild shriek rose upon the air as Miss Hayward fell back into the arms of Alibamo, insensible.

"By whom was he killed?"

"By massa Nettleton dar, sure. I her'd across de riber, jis as plain as day."

Nettleton started back in horror, his eyes extending widely, and his frame trembling. A general murmur of disbelief ran through the crowd.

"Did you see him do the deed?" asked the colonel.

"Golly, I couldn't see much, it war so dark. But I hear massa cap'n say, 'Oh, Nettleton, you kill me!' Golly, see how massa Nettleton shake!"

"Where was this?"

"Rite down by dat tree. His blood is all ober de ground; I jest see it."

In an instant Nettleton had dashed off for the spot indicated. In accordance with an order from the colonel, he was pursued. Reaching the locality named, he gazed upon the ground. It was red with blood—fresh blood. He threw himself upon the earth, and wept and moaned, and called upon his captain to return. His grief was terrible to behold. By this time the officers and many of the men had arrived. They gazed upon the grief-stricken servant with respect, and more than one expression of sympathy was heard.

"If Captain Hayward has been murdered, it was not by that boy. Nettleton loved his captain too much to harm him," said Lieutenant Wells. "I am inclined to think the deed has been done by skulking guerillas."

"I incline to your opinion, Lieutenant Wells, as to the innocence of Nettleton. But, as to the deed having been done by guerillas, it is not likely. It is much too near camp."

"But Hayward certainly had no enemy in our camp who would have done this deed."

"We do not know the secret motives which animate the human heart," replied Walker, in a tone and manner not devoid of meaning.

"Let instant search be made for the body," commanded the colonel. It was done, but no trace of it could be found, although the water was too shallow to have permitted it to float down the river. Attention was again directed to Nettleton, who was sitting erect, gazing at a piece of sharp, bloody steel, which he held in his hand. Viewing it a moment, he sprung to his feet, and fixed

his eyes upon Lieutenant Wells. Then he turned to the colonel and handed him the blade. That officer examined it. Directing his gaze upon Lieutenant Wells, he asked :—

“Has any one among you a small Spanish dirk, with a highly-polished and ornamented blade?”

“I had such a one,” replied Wells, “but I have missed it for several days.”

The colonel instantly turned toward the camp, commanding all to follow him. He halted before the tent of Lieutenant Wells, and said :—

“You, Captain Walker, and you, Adjutant Hinton, enter this tent, and tell me what you find.”

The search lasted but a moment, during which time Wells had been assisting Miss Hayward, but not without evincing much agitation. Walker now appeared, holding in his hand a bowl of bloody water, and exhibiting the broken stiletto, covered with blood, which had been found in the overcoat pocket of Wells. A shirt, also, was found, which was stained with blood.

“What can you say to this damning proof of your guilt?” asked the colonel.

“I know nothing of it.”

“Arrest the murderer of Captain Harry Hayward!” commanded the colonel, in a loud voice.

The guards instantly seized him.

“Murderer! He a murderer—and of my brother! No! no! This is some dreadful dream. Oh, tell me my brother is not murdered; it will kill me. Oh, see! Pity a friendless girl, who kneels to you and begs you to tell her that you have not deprived her of a dear brother. Speak to me, Edward. I did love you, and you would not harm him.”

Wells could not speak. He had never spoken to Miss

Hayward of his love for her; but now, in the delirium of her grief, she had confessed her love for him. Oh, what a moment!

Walker advanced to raise Miss Hayward from her bended position before Wells.

"Paws off, ye darn skunk!" yelled Nettleton, as he hurled Walker to the ground. "I alone am her protector now."

CHAPTER III.

THE PROPOSAL—THE INTERRUPTION—THE INDIAN—THE RESCUE—THE WOUNDED MAN—THE MYSTERY.

NEAR the village of Ozark, at the base of a ridge of mountains of that name, runs a most beautiful stream or river, which bears the name of the village, and is one of the tributaries of the north fork of the Gasconade. Its banks are high, and covered with a thick but small growth of the "scrub" oak, peculiar to that portion of Missouri. The bed of the river sparkles with brilliant white and yellow pebbles, polished by the rush of waters for thousands of years. A fine bridge spans the stream along the main road, that runs through the only opening in the forest for miles around. After crossing this bridge, and ascending a sharp hill, the village of Ozark is reached. This consists of about twenty ordinary-looking dwellings, a court-house, and a rough building, dignified by the name of hotel. Beyond the village, and higher up the mountain, is a line of rolling hills, which overlook the country for miles around. On one of these, and near the edge of a grove, were to be seen a cluster of tents, and, from the number of horses picketed but a short distance away, it would at once be supposed, from a distance, to

be a cavalry camp, with perhaps a section or two of artillery.

On a sloping point, extending from the side of the bridge to the stream, and reclining upon the turf, were two persons. The one a young man of marked appearance, and the other a female of much beauty, although her dress bespoke her a native of that portion of the country.

" Nettie, when do you expect your sister to return ? "

" It is difficult to answer, Charles ; but I trust very soon. "

" Have you heard from her recently ? "

" No. There is no way in which she can communicate with me. The mails have been discontinued, you are aware, from Rolla to Springfield. "

" If you can visit the army, I presume you can both despatch and receive letters. Are you not very anxious to learn how she is treated among the Federals ? "

" I am most anxious ; still I have no fears. "

" I cannot feel as you do upon that subject. I would not awaken useless fears in your breast, but I have not so much confidence in their magnanimous natures. "

" Charles, you told me to-day, for the first time, that you loved me, and asked me if I could not address you as *dear* Charles. You have been very kind to me, and, on one occasion, you rescued me from the hands of a *villain*. I feel grateful—truly so. But, whatever my feelings may be, I never can wed my country's enemy. Look yonder. You see that white cottage. Once it was beautifully adorned with creeping vines, and the lawn before it bloomed with flowers and shrubbery. But, dearer than all, within its walls lived my father and my sister. Look at it now ! Its beauty has departed—it is a *wreck* ;

father and sister have been driven from it, while I have been detained here by force. You profess to love me. If you do so, prove it! We are now more than a mile from the rebel camp, and you can escape with me to Springfield."

"I will assist you to escape; indeed, I will accompany you a portion of the way to Springfield. But I must return to my own people and fight with them to the last. I do love you, and I would become your husband, gladly, if I could be satisfied you loved me for myself alone. But, I cannot sacrifice one jot of honour or principle to win even you, dear Nettie."

"And you will go with me now?"

"Yes—stay, what is that? Did you not hear a low, moaning sound?"

"I heard nothing."

"Well, perhaps I am mistaken. But I fancied I heard such a sound. No matter. I will go with you now to Springfield."

"To what purpose, young man?"

The speaker was a powerful person, and had emerged from the bridge just in time to hear the last sentence of Charles Campbell.

"So, sir," he continued, "you would desert us, and join the Yankees, and all for your foolish regard for this vixen!"

"Colonel Price, if you were not an officer I would make you eat your words. I have served you faithfully, and you have no right to question my loyalty. I do not intend to desert, neither is this lady a vixen any more than you are a coward."

Price started, bit his lips, and frowned fiercely. At length he asked:—

"Why did you propose visiting Springfield with this—lady?"

"I intended to accompany her a portion of the way, and then to return to my duty."

"Why does she wish to visit Springfield?"

"Because her father and sister are both in St. Louis, and she wishes to rejoin them."

"Did not yonder cottage belong to her father?"

"It did."

"He was one of the most bitter opposers in this section. And you love his abolition daughter?"

"I love his daughter, sir!"

"Enough. You will return to camp this moment. I will take charge of this young lady. When I rejoin you, I shall put your loyalty and your courage to the test. Do you see yonder boat?"

He pointed up the river. A small boat was seen floating down the stream, in which three men were sitting erect, and the form of a fourth, lying prostrate.

"How do you propose testing my loyalty, Colonel Price?"

"That boat contains a Yankee officer. He is to be hung up by the neck. You shall perform the job."

"Is not that man wounded, Colonel Price?"

"Yes, very badly so, I am informed."

"Then I will not perform the base thing you propose."

Price drew a revolver, and pointing it to the head of Campbell, commanded him to start at once for camp. He had scarcely done so, when a powerful Indian sprung from concealment, and snatched the weapon from his hand. At the same time, he seized Price, as if he had been a child, and hurled him into the water below. Without waiting to watch the result of this sudden im-

mersion upon the chivalrous colonel, he caught the maiden in his arms, and bounded off in the direction of Springfield. As he started, he beckoned to the young man, and muttered :—

“Come—follow—me save her !”

Price floundered about in the water for a moment, and finally succeeded in reaching the shore just as the boat came up.

“Come—quick—join me in the pursuit !” yelled Price.

The three men leaped upon the bank, and, at the command of Price, all discharged their pieces after the retreating Indian, but without effect. Pursuit was then ordered, but Price, observing that Campbell did not follow, turned and asked :—

“Are you not coming, sir ?”

“No !” was the prompt reply.

Price felt for his revolver, but finding it gone, he only muttered, “Curse you,” and then commenced the pursuit. For over a mile it was kept up. The pursuers gained upon the Indian, who was considerably obstructed in his flight by the female. At last Price exclaimed :—

“By the eternal, there come the Yankees !”

Sure enough, just appearing in view upon an elevated point a little beyond, was seen a squadron of cavalry and a section of flying artillery, rapidly advancing.

“To the hill ! Give the signal for our guns—to the bridge—secure the prisoner in the boat !”

These commands were given by Price, as he commenced a rapid retreat toward the bridge. Pausing on the hill just before reaching it, he unfurled a small flag and made a signal. In an instant all was astir in the rebel camp, and artillery and cavalry soon came dashing down the hill.

"Where is the prisoner?" yelled Price, as he came to the bridge.

"Perhaps the young man you left here has taken him to camp."

"But the boat is gone! However, there is no time to be lost now. They are upon us! Quick!"

Colonel Price started for the opposite end of the bridge, followed by his three confederates. The rebel troops were still some distance from that end of the bridge nearest their camp, which it was evident they intended reaching, if possible, in order to sweep the narrow passage, if the Union forces attempted to cross. The Federals, however, were the first to gain that point. But, had a crossing been effected, as soon as they reached the opposite side they would have been exposed to the most galling fire of the enemy, as there was a large space of flat, swampy ground in front, and then a sharp bluff, upon which the rebel artillery would, in such a case, be planted. The commander of the Federals, observing this situation at a glance, ordered a halt, and brought his section of artillery into position. One piece was placed so as to enfilade the bridge, and the other upon a little rise of ground, in a position where it could sweep their lines beyond. The rebels observing this, threw forward two guns, amid a deadly fire from the Unionists, and succeeded in taking a position upon the opposite end of the bridge. Several rounds of grape were hurled back and forth, but, as the cover was good, little damage was done. The cavalry attempted a crossing, but the thick growth of oaks prevented. A charge was about to be ordered across the bridge, when an explosion took place, and it was shattered to fragments. Taking ad-

"So you are a Yankee soldier?" exclaimed one of the party.

"No I ain't; I'm a darn skunk."

This reply, and the ungainly appearance of Nettleton, caused a laugh throughout the entire party.

"You are not a Yankee soldier? Then what are you doing with that uniform?"

Nettleton looked at his dress, and for the first time became conscious that he had not changed it. He, however, instantly replied:—

"I am a spy for the General."

"What General?"

"General Price, to be sure."

This created another fit of merriment.

"Just as if the likes of you would be employed as a spy! Why, you don't know enough to last you half a mile."

"That's just the reason why I am a spy. I am such a darn skunk no one pays any attention to me."

"Have you been in the Yankee camp here?"

"Yes."

"Have you a Confederate uniform under that blue?"

"Yes," replied Nettleton, throwing off his coat, and exposing the grey.

"To what company and regiment do you belong?"

"No company. I go it on my own hook."

"You know General Price?"

"Yes, very well."

"Have you ever been in his camp?"

"Often."

"Describe him."

Nettleton had, on one occasion, accompanied a party of disguised Union officers into the very camp of Price,

while that General held possession of the Upper Osage. One of the officers, being detected and wounded, was borne along with the retreating rebel army from the Osage to Springfield, and Nettleton had followed on for the purpose of rendering assistance if possible. His apparent stupidity prevented suspicion, and he had been one of the leading spirits in a rescue which afterwards occurred. He was, in consequence, not only known to General Price himself, but to a large number of his officers and men, and hence it was very desirable for him to avoid the main army. He supposed that he could deceive his captors or effect his escape. And the shadowy thought that Captain Hayward might have been seized and borne toward the rebel quarters at once decided his course. He gave an accurate description of Price.

"Good!" answered one of the party, "it is evident you are a spy. I find you on the spot the Yankees have just left. You have their uniform on and ours under it. So far that looks well. You know and have perfectly described our General. That renders it certain you have seen him. Now, one of two things is certain: you are a Yankee spy, and have been in our camp with that grey uniform outside, and then communicated your information to your General; or you are a Confederate spy, who, having just been in the Yankee camp, must have important information for our General. In either case we shall conduct you to him. If you are his man, then all will be right; if you are not, then you will be hung within half an hour after your arrival. You understand?"

"I first thought of going on to Springfield, but I think I have all the information necessary, and I had made up my mind to return. I halted here a moment to change

my dress and to look for a Yankee officer who was supposed to be killed last night. But I think he was only badly wounded, and may yet be found alive in the tall grass. Look for him." These words were spoken by Nettleton in an apparently cheerful tone.

"Oh! you mean the captain who was stabbed last night."

"Yes, yes; do you know anything of him?"

"You appear especially anxious, Mr. What's-your-name?"

"I am anxious," replied Nettleton, fiercely. "He insulted me, and I would be revenged."

"Don't trouble yourself. He'll catch it soon enough. He was not killed, but was taken out of the water by us."

"Who struck the blow?" yelled Nettleton.

"No one of our party. We were concealed upon the opposite bank. We could not see the murderer strike, for it was too dark; but we saw the body thrown in the stream, and saw the stabber wash himself in the river. We would have fired upon him, but were afraid of rousing the Yanks. We waited until he left the body, after throwing it into the stream, and then we recovered it. The man was still alive. He had only fainted from loss of blood. We dressed his wound as well as we could, and then conveyed him to a house the other side of the pike. He will recover; but Colonel Price has an especial spite against him. He met him once at Springfield. So, when he recovers, he will be hung."

"Where is he now?" asked Nettleton.

"At a little house not fifty rods from here, just the other side of the pike."

Without a word, Nettleton bounded like a deer in the

direction the Federal forces had taken. But a dozen shots were fired after him, and he fell. He was soon secured, when it was ascertained that one bullet had cut his neck badly, and another had struck the ankle, although it had not broken the bone. He was still able to walk, and, after being bound, he was dragged forward toward Cassville.

A march of forty miles was almost too much even for the tough Nettleton, more especially as he had received a severe shot in the ankle ; but he bore up firmly, and at last arrived at the outskirts of the rebel camp. He had become very lame, and rolled about like a ship in a heavy sea. As he entered the camp, many were the jeers and taunts which hailed this specimen of the Yankee soldier. Nettleton made no reply, although his countenance bespoke his contempt.

He was now near the quarters of Price.

"By thunder !" yelled one of the Confederate soldiers, "that is the very fellow who fooled us at Springfield. Hang him ! Hang him !"

An explanation was soon made, and Nettleton's fate appeared certain, as a "drum-head" court-martial had already been convened. Sentence was soon given—the Yankee spy was to be hung upon the spot !

A rough scaffolding was formed under a large tree, and a rope, with the fatal noose attached, thrown over a limb. Nettleton ascended the platform in silence, although his frame trembled.

"I never saw a Yankee yet that did not fear to die," exclaimed one of the bystanders.

"Then you see one now, you darn skunk," replied Nettleton.

"Why do you tremble, then ?" asked the Confederate.

"I was thinking of the captain, and of his poor sister 'Mamie.'"

"Ha! ha! ha! This booby is in love. A romantic spy. And the idol of his passion is called 'Mamie.'"

"You lie, you dog!" yelled Nettleton. "I only—"

"What is all this?" asked a stately-looking officer, who had just approached, and before whom all the rest fell back.

"A spy, General," was the response.

"Why was he not brought to my quarters?"

"Because Raines ordered a drum head court-martial."

"Release the man until I have conversed with him."

Nettleton was released, and, as he descended from the scaffolding, he was recognized by General Price.

"We have met before?" asked Price.

"Yes, General, we have," was the prompt reply of Nettleton.

"What were you doing in my camp the first time we met?"

"Serving my captain, whom I love."

"Good! What are you doing here now?"

"That will require considerable explanation," added Nettleton.

"Go on," said Price.

"Well, General, some darn skunk murdered my captain, and when our troops left Grand Prairie, on their return to Springfield, I remained behind to search for his body. I am no spy."

"But you said you were a spy, serving General Price," replied one of the soldiers who had brought Nettleton to the rebel camp.

"How can you explain this?" asked Price.

"Well, ye see, General, Miss Sally—no, I mean Miss

Mamie—that's the captain's sister—will break her poor heart and die of grief if she can't learn something about her brother. Them darn skunks as arrested me told me that Captain Hayward was not killed. Besides this, as nice a darn sk—I mean as good a man as ever lived, and one who loves Miss Sally—no, that Miss Sally keeps running in my head—one as loves Miss Mamie, is accused of murdering the captain. But I know better, for I found proof enough to convict the right one. I wanted to tell Mamie that Sally—darn Sally—that her brother was not dead, and to clear Lieutenant Wells and convict the one as did the deed. So I told them sneaks as how I was a spy, in hopes they'd let me alone."

"Would you give any information you may have gleaned here, if I should set you free?"

"I ain't no such darned skunk, General. Honour is honour bright with me."

"What have you seen here?"

"A lot of the darndest sapheads I ever met."

"If I should set you free, will you fight against me?"

"Like the very devil, the first time we meet in fair play."

"Why do you wear that grey suit under your uniform?"

"Because captain's always getting himself into some scrape, and I have to hunt him up. Sometimes I have to go among the Johnnies to do it, and then the blue ain't healthy."

"Will you ever act as spy upon me if I let you go?"

"Not unless capt'n does. But I'm his body-guard, and shall go everywhere he does, if I can."

"What is your name?"

"William Nettleton."

"Well, William, I think we shall be obliged to hang you."

"All right, General," answered Nettleton, stepping upon the scaffolding again. "And them darn sneaks shan't say they never see'd a Yankee die bravely. But, General, let me ask you one favour. You don't want to see a good fellow shot for what he didn't do, and a murderer go clear, do you?"

"Certainly not."

"Then all I ask is, that you send this hankercher to Colonel Mann, and tell him the murderer din't wash in a basin in his tent, but in the river, and then threw this wiper away; and that the guilty one has two hearts, made with nails, on the sole of each boot. And tell Sally—no, Mamie—that the captain is—Lieutenant Wells—and Walker—the skunk, when I'm dead—that Sally—no, capt'n won't think of poor Nettleton—and—"

"Oh stop! stop! William, I can never recollect all this. You had better go yourself and attend to this matter."

"What, General? Do you mean it?" cried William, as he sprung from the scaffold and gazed earnestly at Price.

"On one condition I will permit you to go."

"Well, what is it?"

"That as soon as you have given your evidence in the court-martial which will probably be ordered, you will return at once and be hung."

"I'll do it; I'm a loafer if I don't."

"You swear it?"

"Yes, by the great jumping jingo, and Sally Long's tearful eyes!"

"The guard will see this man safely beyond our lines,"

said Price, speaking to one of his officers, "and furnish him a pass and a horse. Let one of our men accompany him near to the Federal lines, and bring back the animal which William will ride."

Nettleton rushed forward, and grasping the hand of Price, shook it violently, and then exclaimed, as he took his leave :—

"General Price, you ain't such a darn skunk as I thought you was."

CHAPTER V.

THE COURT-MARTIAL AND THE HOSTAGE.

THE division which had been encamped on Grand Prairie reached Springfield in safety, and formed their temporary camp in the field, back of the brick school-house, which stands about a quarter of a mile to the west of the new court-house.

The first order issued to the officers of the battalion of Benton Cadets, the 35th and 37th Illinois, was to assemble at a given time, to act upon a court-martial, at the quarters of Major D—, Judge-Advocate, to try the case of Lieutenant Edward Wells, charged with the wilful murder of Harry Hayward, a captain in the service of the United States of America, and attached to the army of the Mississippi, now under command of Major-General Hunter.

It was a sad day ! Lieutenant Wells was a favourite with both officers and men of his command. He always had been mild as a female, kind and benevolent—sacrificing his own comfort for the good of the privates in his battalion. True, some said that Wells would not fight bravely—that he ought to have been created a woman ; but everybody gave him the credit of being the kindest

of the kind. When first accused, there arose a very bitter feeling against him. Captain Hayward also was a great favourite with the men. He was a stern but kind soldier. When the news of his brutal murder came to the knowledge of his "boys," their first cry was "revenge," and they naturally sought some one on whom to wreak their vengeance. At first Lieutenant Wells narrowly escaped a summary fate, more especially as it was whispered about camp that Wells had become a suitor for the hand of the fair Mamie Hayward, had been rejected by her, and spurned by the captain. But in a short time it was given out that Mamie had confessed her affection for Wells, and that Captain Hayward had remarked in the presence of others, that he deemed Wells an honourable man, and would gladly favour his suit. This turned the tide of feeling in favour of the lieutenant, and when the court-martial was convened, nothing but a consciousness of a soldier's duty prevented an open revolt, or at least a most decided and forcible expression of feeling. But, trusting to the judgment of the officers forming the court, the soldiers decided to await the result.

Have our readers ever witnessed a trial by court-martial? It is not like the ordinary court of justice. First, the charge is read, as thus :—

"Lieutenant Edward Wells, of Company H, Battalion of Benton Cadets, is charged with the wilful murder of Harry Hayward, a captain in the U. S. Army.

"2nd.—Specification 1st. In this, that said Lieutenant Edward Wells did, on the night of the 7th day of November, 1861, assassinate and murder said," &c.

Following this, in any case of the kind, would be found a list of "specifications," setting forth in detail all the chief events connected with the crime.

The prisoner was brought to the tent of Major D—to answer to the charge. He was very pale, yet perfectly composed; and when the question was asked, the ready and firm response was:—

“Not Guilty!”

The Judge-Advocate, a noble-hearted but just man, informed the prisoner that he was to act, not only as “prosecuting counsel,” but as “counsel” for the prisoner, and that he (the Judge-Advocate) must give the prisoner the benefit of any doubt that might arise in his favour.

To those of our readers not familiar with the *modus operandi* of a court-martial, we would give the following information for their benefit.

The doors of the court are closed to all outsiders. The prisoner makes his plea, and retires. The witnesses are brought forward and examined, but no cross-examination is allowed. If a question is to be asked by any of the officers sitting upon the court, it must be reduced to writing, and silently handed to the Judge-Advocate. If he sees fit to put the question, it is done; if not, it is thrown aside.

We will now proceed to give a brief summary of the trial.

“Lieutenant Edward Wells, you are charged with the wilful murder of Harry Hayward, a captain in the United States service. What is your plea? Guilty, or not guilty?”

“Not guilty!” was the decided response.

“Let the first witness be called—George Swasey, coloured.”

The person familiarly known as “Swasey’s nigger” took the stand. When brought forward, he glanced around as if fearful of something, and then asked:—

"Is massa William Nettletum where he can hear dis chile tell de truff?"

"You have nothing to fear from any person, if you speak the truth, and all the truth," replied Major D—.

"Well, den, de fact am dis. I went to see my gal. When I cum back, I met de rebs. I hid behind a log. I see'd some one stick a knife in massa cap'n, and I heard him say: 'Oh! Nettletum, you kill me!'"

All questions were answered in the same spirit, and it became evident that the negro believed Nettleton the real murderer.

The next witness brought upon the stand was Alibamo Hinton. She swore that Nettleton's tent was next to the one she occupied—that he was in attendance upon her and Miss Hayward, by permission of Captain Hayward, and that Nettleton had not been out of her presence that night. In the first part of the evening, Nettleton had remained near her door; in the latter part, he had missed his captain, and had prostrated himself on a rug near the tent entrance. She had seen him there all night, as she had not slept at all."

Miss Hayward was too much overcome to appear as a witness, and was excused.

The next witness was Captain Hugh Walker.

The feeling of the soldiers to learn the result of the trial was intense, and by the time Captain Walker was called to the stand, some twenty or thirty had crept to the edge of the tent, and endeavoured to conceal themselves in the tall grass outside, to catch the proceedings. But they were discovered by Walker, who demanded that they should be removed. This was done, and a guard placed outside.

Captain Walker's oath was as follows:—

"On the night of the 7th of November, I followed Captain Hayward from his tent. It was at the time gradually becoming dark. My motive in doing so I will explain. As soon as it began to be rumoured that we were to meet Price, I observed a change in the conduct of Captain Hayward. He had ever been the centre of attraction. His tent was the 'head-quarters' of 'our circle,' drawn thither by the natural gaiety of the captain, and the presence there of ladies. But this feeling appeared to forsake him, and on more than one occasion he denounced the war as inhuman. Pardon me; I would not speak against the dead, but I doubted the loyalty of the man, and not his courage, and this it was which induced me to follow him.

"I halted beneath a large tree, which stood near the spot where the murder evidently was committed. I saw the captain seat himself upon the bank. At this time it was quite dark, but I saw a shadow approaching. It passed near me, but I failed to discover who it was. I first thought it might be William Nettleton following his master. I listened attentively, however, as the extreme caution of the intruder attracted my attention. In an instant I heard a groan, a heavy fall, and a voice exclaim: 'Oh, William, where are you? Nettleton, I am murdered. Wells is the assassin!'"

A shudder ran through the court. Major D— dropped his head upon his hand and was silent. The officers whispered together. At last, a written question was handed to the Judge-Advocate, which was asked:—

"Captain Walker, why did you not give the alarm, or arrest the murderer yourself?"

"Sir," was the prompt reply, "the sequel will show. It was dark; I could not distinguish the features of any

"No, my ever kind and dear friend," replied Alibamo, "she does not believe you guilty. Nor am I satisfied that Captain Hayward has been killed. I am under the impression that he was wounded and taken prisoner by some rebels, who were lurking near our camp."

"You hope for the best, and so do I; but have you any grounds for the formation of such an opinion?" asked Wells.

"Yes, and to me the best of evidence. William Nettleton went in search of the captain. If he was killed, William would have found his body before this, and returned to us with the intelligence. His continued absence convinces me that the captain is still alive, and that his faithful friend Nettleton is at this moment following him. It is this hope which gives me fresh courage, and I believe a few days will see you free, and your name as untarnished as it should be. I wished to tell you this, and I also wished Miss Hayward to express to you, personally, her confidence in your innocence; hence, I brought you here. You may leave us now, as my poor friend is too agitated to converse."

Wells was about to depart in silence, but Miss Hayward for the first time raised her face, and her tearful eyes met his own. He sprung forward, and, kneeling before her, pressed his lips to her white forehead, and said:—

"That look is worth to me years of happiness. But you can read my heart now. When I am proved innocent, then I will speak the words which must not till then pass my lips. God bless you!"

He arose to depart, but was met by Captain Walker, who had just entered the tent.

Walker cast a rapid glance around him, and placing

his finger upon his lips, enjoined silence upon all. Wells stood, with arms folded, sternly and suspiciously gazing upon him, while Alibamo asked :—

“What are your wishes, Sir?”

“To serve you and your friend,” was the reply, spoken in a low voice, and with apparent hesitation.

“It must be an important service which could render pardonable the fact, sir, of your having, unannounced, and so rudely, intruded upon our privacy,” said Mrs. Hinton.

“It is an important service. No less than the rescue of —. Will you be seated?”

The parties seated themselves in silence, when Walker continued :—

“You must pardon me if I speak plainly, and directly to the point. It is necessary that I should be brief.”

“Proceed, sir.”

“Miss Hayward,” continued Walker, turning toward the lady, “I must give a few words in explanation to you. I did love—do love you now. You need not shrink from me. You will, upon hearing my words, understand me better. No man loves without hope, until there arises between him and the one beloved some impassable barrier. The barrier which arose to blast my hopes was your previous love, and the unfortunate circumstance which has made me an unwilling witness against one to whom, as I think, your heart still clings.”

“You will please to be brief in comment, and come as quickly as possible to the point in question,” replied Mrs. Hinton, as she observed the agitation of Miss Hayward.

“I come to the point now. I know Miss Hayward is very unhappy, and I would not add to it. I would save her lover.”

"To whom do you refer?" asked Wells, coldly.

"To you, sir," was the prompt reply.

"I cannot claim the title you honour me with, in connexion with that lady. Besides, she might not thank you for such a service."

"Oh, yes! yes!" eagerly replied Miss Hayward, as she gazed upon the speaker.

"Stay one moment, Miss Hayward," answered Wells.

"Let us first learn in what manner my deliverance can be effected. Captain Walker, you can proceed."

"You speak very coldly, Lieutenant Wells, to one who comes to offer you service. But, before I proceed, I must exact a promise, that if my proposition is not accepted, those to whom my words are addressed will make no exposure of the same."

There was a nod of assent, and Walker proceeded:—

"I will not deny the fact that solicitude for Miss Hayward impels the act. But of this no more. Lieutenant Wells, you are unbound and unwatched. Place your sash across your breast, as worn by the officer of the day. I will give you the countersign, and thus you will be enabled to pass the pickets, and make good your escape. You can secure a safe retreat, and, after the excitement of the mur—of this unfortunate affair—has died away, Miss Hayward can be apprised of your place of concealment, and take such action in the case as her judgment or heart may dictate."

A deathlike silence reigned for a moment, during which rapid glances were exchanged between the friends. At length Wells asked:—

"Captain Walker, would not an escape imply, upon my part, an acknowledgment of the crime of which I am accused?"

"It might, in the estimation of many. But you are generally believed guilty. What matters it what your actions imply to them? Your friends here, who have already made up their minds, will merely look upon it as a desine upon your part to escape a certain, an unmerited, and a dishonourable death."

"And you will assist my flight?"

"I will."

"And will you afterward convey Miss Hayward to me if she will come?"

"With pleasure; but you anticipate my intended services."

Another rapid and significant glance passed between Mrs. Hinton and Wells, which was not observed by Walker.

"One thing more, Walker; do you believe me guilty of murder?"

"H'm—I did."

"And now?"

"I may have been mistaken. But, be that as it may, I will assist your flight."

"Are you ready?" asked Wells, rising.

"I wish you to return to your cell, and when all is ready, say two or three o'clock, I will come for you."

"But I will not go!" was the firm reply.

Walker perceived his mistake, and quickly added:—

"As you please, sir." And turning, he was about to leave the tent, when he was confronted by the "officer of the day."

"Captain Walker," he said, sternly, "you feel an especial interest in Lieutenant Wells. I did not suppose so, but I learned the fact from your conversation. I am glad you do feel so great a friendship for him. You shall

have opportunity to make it manifest. You shall become his Pythias ? ”

“ What do you mean, sir ? ”

“ This : that the sentence of Lieutenant Wells will be read to-morrow afternoon at four o'clock. In the meantime, you, as his dear friend, do not wish to see him confined, and will most cheerfully take his place in the prison, and wear his chains. If the lieutenant is present to-morrow at four, you, as his hostage, will be released. If he should escape, as you have advised, of course you will be held as an aider and abettor in that escape ; and when you receive that punishment your guilt deserves, you will have the consolation of knowing that you suffer for the benefit of your very dear friend ! Soldiers,” commanded the officer, “ place the irons upon Captain Walker, and convey him to the guard-room in the old log-building.”

“ Are you mad ? You dare not do it ! ” yelled Walker, as he foamed with rage. But the soldiers promptly obeyed the command, and Walker was taken from the tent.

“ This indignity shall he avenged ! ” but he was carried quickly forward, and the guard-room door soon closed upon him.

“ You will be at liberty, upon your parole of honour, until to-morrow at four o'clock, Lieutenant Wells.”

The officers shook hands and separated.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT AND THE CONSPIRATOR—THE
MYSTERY UNFOLDED.

JUST as the fading twilight was yielding to darkness, and before Lieutenant Wells had been removed from his cell by request of Alibamo, a scene occurred to which we must revert.

The room in which Wells was placed was in the wing of a log-house, just in the rear of the brick school-house to which we have alluded. Two doors led from this apartment, one opening into the garden, the other into the main building. This latter door had been firmly secured. Near that opening into the garden was a small window, the only one in the apartment. As the guard was stationed at the door, escape from the room was impossible. Surrounding this garden were a number of hedges, running in various directions, some of them forming the street fence, while others ornamented the winding gravel walks.

As soon as it was quite dark, a person closely enveloped and disguised emerged from among the tents, and passed cautiously along in the still intenser darkness of the hedge shadow. Ever and anon he would pause and listen. Finally he reached the further hedge, remote from the camp. He paused a moment, and then gave a low and peculiar whistle. It was immediately answered, and two men joined the first comer.

"Are you ready?"

"No!" was the answer.

"And why not?"

"Because we have not received our pay."

"Is that the only reason?"

"The only reason, after you have given us full instructions."

"Where is your powder?"

"In the upper part of the garden, under the hedge. We have secured eight twelve-pound shells, which we took from that battery over yonder. Powder enough to blow a mountain to the devil."

"Well, here is a hundred apiece. When the job is done, you will find as much more in the hollow log that I pointed out last night. Be careful and make sure work!"

"Well, your instructions!"

"You will follow the outer hedge. Creep along with great caution, and make no noise. There will be no danger, as the guard are not on the north side of the camp. When you reach the log-building in the rear of the brick school-house, you will observe a small wing, or addition, extending to the rear. At the back of this wing you will find an excavation under the house sufficiently large for your shells. Place them in it, lay your train, and then apply the match. But you must do this with great caution, as a guard is stationed upon the opposite side."

"Don't be alarmed. Anyone near that old log shanty will go to kingdom-come before to-morrow morning."

The trio then separated.

When Captain Walker was seized and chained by the soldiers, he made a desperate resistance, but in vain. He soon occupied the little room vacated by Lieutenant Wells. The door closed; he heard the clanking of the heavy chains which secured it, and left him in utter darkness. He stamped, and raved, and cursed. Suddenly starting, and

wildly clutching his throat, as if some terrible thought had crossed his mind, he groaned and sunk upon the floor.

"Fool!—oh! fool that I was! I thought if I pretended friendship, and offered to assist in his escape, all suspicion of this night's work would be diverted from me. But now—oh! my God! What is the hour? Hark! I hear them working under the building! No; it is not the men yet. It is too early. I dare not tell the guard, for an acknowledgment of any suspicion of such a plot would be a confession of my guilt. Let me search for some mode of escape!"

Walker crawled cautiously around the floor, but not a crevice could be found. Finally, exhausted, he sunk down, giving way to his utter despair. An hour—two hours—dragged slowly by, which appeared an age of misery to the wretched man.

"If I give the alarm, even saying that a peculiar sound attracted my attention, the ruffians who are to do the work will recognize me, and I shall, thus implicated, suffer an ignominious death! What is that? Great God! they are at work! But they are making so much noise that the guard will hear them, and I shall yet be saved!"

"Don't make quite so much noise in there, if you please!" exclaimed the guard, as he knocked upon the door where he was stationed.

"It is not me!" yelled the frantic man. "Some one is at the rear of the building, trying to dig through—they want to kill me!"

"We will see about that!" replied the guard, as he left his post, and walked toward the spot indicated.

Walker fell upon his knees and exclaimed:—

"Oh! I am saved—saved that dreadful death!"

He bent down, and applying his ear to a small crevice between the logs, where the mud-mortar had fallen out, he listened. He could distinctly hear the words spoken :

"Have you silenced that d—d guard?" was asked.

"Yes, cut his wizen. No danger. Hurry with the train of powder!"

"Gentlemen!" yelled Walker, "don't go any further. I am not the man!"

"Quick—fire the train!" exclaimed a voice outside.

A flash was seen, and then another said :—

"Curse it, the train has failed. Throw the torch among the shells, and then run!"

Walker waited to hear no more, but throwing himself with all his violence against the door, he set up a series of yells which made the camp ring. In a moment steps were heard, the door was thrown open, and Walker, livid with fear, and frantic, staggered into the open air, gasping for breath. When he had sufficiently recovered his fright to listen, the commander of the squad said :—

"The powder-plot has been discovered, sir. There is no further danger on that head. But you will return to your cell!"

This order Walker was compelled to obey, and he was again left in darkness, with feelings better imagined than described.

The night wore slowly away. Lieutenant Wells had retired to his own tent. His calmness did not indicate a guilty mind. Alibamo, too, was wakeful, and strove by every possible kindness to sustain the heart and hopes of her suffering companion. Miss Nettie Morton, who had so recently joined their society, was occupying a tent in company with Sally Long, near that of Mrs. Hinton. They also were watchful—anxious for the morrow.

But, perhaps, the most wretched person in that camp was Captain Hugh Walker. No officer would have dared to place irons upon him, and confine him in a rough cell, upon any slight pretext. Was it not possible that something of a serious character had been discovered against him? This surmise seemed to haunt him, for he acted in a manner to indicate the wildest apprehensions.

Morning came at last, and slowly the day advanced. A guard brought Walker his breakfast, but the man refused to answer any question. During the afternoon he heard the beating of the drums, and the bugle-blast, which he well understood was calling the division together for some important purpose. He felt satisfied that one object was the reading of the finding of the court-martial in the case of Lieutenant Wells. But what part was he to play in the scene? This was the question which caused his heart to beat with violence, as the chains fell from the door of his prison, and he was called forth.

He accompanied the guard in silence, and soon entered the hollow square formed by the three brigades of the division. Walker glanced eagerly around, and there, standing beside the commanding General, was Lieutenant Wells, with Miss Hayward leaning upon his arm, and near them were their female friends. But a few paces distant were the two ruffians who had been engaged in the powder plot. All was silent. The General advanced and said :—

“ Preliminary to other proceedings, I wish to ask Captain Walker if he ever before saw these two men ? ”

The ruffians advanced, rattling their chains. But Walker drew back, and with forced calmness he replied :—

"I never have!" He dropped his head, gazing upon the ground.

The adjutant, who held the sealed orders of the court-martial by which Lieutenant Wells had been tried, then advanced, and was about to commence reading the document in his hand, when a series of yells were heard, and in the distance was seen the grotesque form of Nettleton, as he came bounding along and bellowing:—

"Stop the shootin'! Stop the shootin'!"

It was well known throughout the army that Nettleton had remained behind in search of Captain Hayward. As he approached, the most intense excitement was manifest. Lieutenant Wells could scarcely control his feelings, and would have rushed forward to meet Nettleton, had not Mrs. Hinton gently laid her hand upon his arm, begging him to be calm. Miss Hayward clung closer to her lover, as she hoped the news about to be brought by her brother's friend would relieve her agony of suspense. A half-suppressed cheer broke from the soldiers as Nettleton burst into the square.

He paused for a moment, his breast heaving, and his eyes glaring wildly. But an instant was sufficient for him to discover that Wells was yet alive, and that the object of his suspicion also lived. He sprung forward, and, without uttering a word, seized Walker by the foot, which he at once drew under his arm; then he as suddenly bounded for the spot where the commandant was standing, dragging the foot along with him.

Of course, this sudden movement on the part of Nettleton had thrown Walker violently upon his head, and, although he kicked, and squirmed, and cursed, he was dragged along as if he had been a child.

When Nettleton reached the commander, he held the

foot of Walker within a few inches of that officer's face, and yelled :—

“ Look ! look ! General—see them boots ! ”

Notwithstanding the intense anxiety felt for the result of Nettleton's search, the ridiculous figure he presented in his eagerness, and that of Walker, who was twisting and struggling to escape, caused a general laugh to run through the division, which was joined in by the commander. Even Wells could not suppress a smile.

“ And what about those boots ? ” asked the commander, after silence had been restored.

“ Why, I've blacked them ! ” yelled Nettleton.

Another laugh was heard along the line.

“ No doubt you have blacked them. But what of it ? ”

“ Why, General, don't you see them two hearts made with nails on the sole of that boot ? ”

“ Certainly, I see them. And what then ? ”

Walker was now permitted to resume his upright position, and he stood trembling with fear and rage, as Nettleton went on to relate his first suspicions of Walker, his search for the body of Captain Hayward, his finding the impression of the footprints standing side by side in the mud, at the edge of the stream, with the marks of two hearts in the sole of each boot ; and then the finding of the handkerchief in the water, which Nettleton then produced.

The officer took the white linen witness, examining it closely, and then said :—

“ Here is the name of ‘ Walker, ’ in the corner. William, did you find this near the place where the murder was committed ? ”

“ Right by the spot where them two boots stood ? ” replied Nettleton, pointing to Walker's feet.

"I can explain this," exclaimed Walker. "I went to the river that day to wash, and I stood upon the bank to do so. I presume I left the impression of my boots there at that time. If I did not, was I not also present in the morning to examine the spot where the murder had been committed? And is it a wonder that the impression of my boots should be left behind?"

"That is certainly true," replied the General. "But of the handkerchief?"

"It fell from my hands as I was washing, and I did not take the trouble to recover it."

"It is very probable!" replied the General.

"So you perceive," replied Walker, as he appeared to gain courage, "your trumped up evidence has fallen to the ground! I did not expect a combination of both officers and men against me, but I find it so. And they wish to see me suffer for the bloody deed done by that coward. The only reason I can assign for this persecution is, that he is in favour with the ladies, and you, sycophants that you are, hope, through him, to gain favour with his fair companions. No doubt, some bargain to that effect already has been effected!"

Captain Walker had by this time become eloquent and defiant. Nettleton, with his too eager perceptions, had failed to foresee the possible fallacy of his proofs, for hope and prejudice together had prevented any calm examination of his evidence. With a sorrowful and troubled look, he turned away. This gave Walker greater confidence, and, in a loud but hoarse voice, turning to the commandant, he cried:—

"And now I demand justice!"

"Which you shall have," replied the General. "But first answer me; how did this handkerchief, which

bears your name, and which you confess to having used in the stream, become bloody?"

That was another point of interest, and Nettleton paused to listen attentively.

"I had a bleeding at the nose, and the reason I threw the dirty thing away was, I did not think it worth washing!"

"Then some person must have recovered it, washed it very carefully, and thrown it into the stream again, for there is no blood upon it!"

Walker attempted a reply, but his utterance failed. The General enjoined silence, and then stepping forward he said, in a voice sufficiently loud to be heard by all present:—

"Captain Walker, I must sum up, before you, the evidence of crimes you have committed, which have no parallel in the history of the army, or of crimes which have ever been or attempted to be committed in any civilized country. I would give you the benefit of a court-martial, were there any doubt of your guilt, and even now may order a trial, but it will only be a formal one. You had better confess your guilt here, before all—ask their pardon—make reparation to those you have most injured, and die repentant."

"I have nothing to confess!" responded Walker, bitterly.

"Have you no fear of the revelations of these two soldiers?" asked the General, pointing to the chained ruffians.

"I have no fear! No doubt, they have been bribed to conspire with you! But vent your spite! Go on!"

"Then, Captain Walker, I will briefly enumerate the circumstances which have been developed, as well as the

facts. The morning we left Grand Prairie you were in command of the squad which escorted the prisoner, Lieutenant Edward Wells. You had not proceeded far when you were overtaken by two men. It was a very easy matter to secure an audience with you, as you were in the rear of the division. They suggested that you should deliver Lieutenant Wells to them, as their commander had an especial spite against him, and wished to secure his person. You asked these men (I refer to the two ruffians now in chains, and standing by your side) how they dared to approach you on such a subject, and they replied that they had witnessed your act the evening previous, and that you need not put on airs with them! You then requested these fellows to meet you the next evening at the upper hedge. You instructed them to secure a number of pounds of powder for some purpose, which you would then explain. You met them the next evening. You gave them instructions. They were about to act upon them, when your outcries from the cell in which you had been placed, and which Lieutenant Wells had left only a short time previously, attracted the attention of the guard, and you were rescued. Prior to this you had offered to assist Lieutenant Wells to escape, but you wished him to return to his cell and remain until two or three o'clock. The fiendish act was to be committed between twelve and one. You pretended friendship, that all suspicion of the act might be diverted from you. Have I spoken correctly, sir?"

"No doubt you have spoken according to the story of those ruffians!" replied Walker. "You cannot bring against me any respectable proof. I look to a court for the justice which I have no reason to expect here."

"Look!"

Walker, who had been shaking like a guilty wretch during the speech of the commander, turned in the direction indicated. The rough garb had fallen from the ruffians, their chains were thrown aside, and, to his astonishment and horror, there stood two of the regimental Union officers, Adjutant Hinton, the husband of Alibamo, and his friend, Captain Clark!

Walker, who now saw how he had been entrapped and detected in his infamy, for a moment was utterly unmanned. But his resolute nature soon triumphed over his fear. Well realizing that penitence could not save him, he sprang to his feet and said:—

"This is all a miserable, contemptible conspiracy—an effort to make out a case against me to shield that woman's pet from the consequences of his clearly proven crime. Hayward is dead, and cannot be made to answer, else—"

"You lie, you dirty, nasty, murderin' skunk!"

"What!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"He lies! the coward that stabs a man in the dark! Hayward is not dead, but lives, and will soon by his evidence send this murderer to kingdom come!"

With a shriek Miss Hayward bounded forward, and fell at the feet of Nettleton, grasping his hands. Wells, who had borne bravely up until this moment, covered his face, and wept tears of joy and of relief from the imputation of crime. Sally Long sprang to the side of Nettleton, and, throwing her arms around his neck, she gave him a hearty kiss, which caused him to roll up his green eyes, and appear in almost as much agony as if he had been struck in the stomach with a cannon-ball. The word was soon passed, and the soldiers, catching the fire, made

the very welkin ring with their shouts, while the band chimed in with the stirring strain—"Hail to the Chief!"

CHAPTER VII.

A LIVE HERO—THE RETROGRADE ARMY MOVEMENT.

THE villain Walker was returned to his lonely cell. Lieutenant Wells was released from all restraint. The soldiers dispersed to talk about the strange turn events had taken; but the centre of attraction was Nettleton. He was seated in front of the Hinton tent. Close beside him was Miss Hayward, kneeling, and gazing mournfully into his face, while Alibamo, Wells, the General, Nettie Morton, Sally Long, the officers who had composed the court-martial, the especial friends of the parties, and as many of the soldiers as could get within hearing distance, were earnestly listening to the narrative of the "body-guard."

Nettleton went on to relate his meeting the rebel scouts, and the fact of their having informed him that Hayward had only been wounded and conveyed toward Wilson's Creek by a party attached to the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Price.

[The reader will mark the distinction between Lieutenant-Colonel Price, who was a ruffian guerilla, and had broken his parole three times—an act repudiated by all honest soldiers of either army—and General Stirling Price, who, although a rebel, always had acted in a gentlemanly and humane manner to all prisoners of war.]

After listening to the story of William, the General drew from his pocket the note which had been found at the Ozark bridge, signed "Charles Campbell." This note must have been written but a few moments before the

fight took place. The date would be just two days after Hayward had received the assassin's stroke, giving about the proper time for the wounded man to be carried from Grand Prairie to Ozark, at which latter place Lieutenant-Colonel Price had formed a temporary camp. The writer spoke of a wounded man in a boat, and against whom Price had an especial spite. This confirmed the conviction that Hayward had been taken thither for the especial gratification of Price's fiendish propensities. The note also said that he bore the marks of a captain's rank, and, in his delirium, spoke of "Net—," which might have reference to the young lady, Nettie Morton, whom he possibly might have seen in the distance, upon the bank, as the boat neared the spot where she was standing, or, as seemed more probable, that the wounded captain was calling upon Nettleton. At all events, it was decided that the person of whom Charles Campbell had written was no other than Captain Hayward. It is true, he was still almost insensible from his wounds, and was near the camp of his most unforgiving enemy, but there was a friend at hand—an enemy in arms—but a friend to the wounded and helpless soldier, as are all true men—and he had written that "he would save him!"

"Why should we not hope?" asked Alibamo, as she clasped her friend Mamie in her arms.

"And why should we not act?" cried Wells, as he clutched the hilt of his sword.

"Yes, we will act," yelled Nettleton, as he sprang up, and appeared ready for instant departure.

"Go, William; follow the stream from Ozark, until you find some trace, and then return to us," said Miss Hayward eagerly.

Nettleton turned his gaze upon Miss Sally for a

moment, and then, as if ashamed of his hesitation, or his weakness, in exhibiting any symptoms of love, he started with a bound, exclaiming :—

“I’m off. Good-by, all !”

He had proceeded, however, but a few steps when he halted, and, scratching his head, his countenance assumed a most woeful expression, and his eyes rolled wildly about.

“What is the matter, William ?” asked Wells.

“Got to go t’other way !” was the melancholy reply.

“Why so ?”

“O, just a bit of—fun—that’s all !”

“Well, tell us what it is, Nettleton ?”

“I can’t ! it will break her heart !” he replied, pointing to Sally.

“So it would, William, if anything dreadful should happen to you !” replied Miss Long, as she dropped her eyes to the ground.

“There, didn’t I tell you so ?” replied the faithful servant, his mouth gaping, and his eyes expanding.

“William,” asked Wells, “do you really love Miss Long ?”

“Love her, lieutenant ? That ain’t no name for it. Why, can’t you see yourself that she’s the sweetest darn sk—no, I mean the nicest critter in the world—exceptin’ Miss Mamie !”

“And does she love you, William ?” asked Alibamo, smiling in spite of herself at the tableau enacting before her.

“Of course I do !” replied Sally, proudly and triumphantly, as if a victory had been won.

“There—there ! Do you hear that ? Now, don’t you pity me ? I believe I am the most ugly cuss in the world.

I never thought anybody would love me, and now I find out the gal as I wants most is just the one as does love me! O, Lordy, I'm sick, I do believe!"

"All right!" Wells responded, with a smile.

"All right! Not by a great sight, sir! Did you think it all right when you loved Miss Mamie, and thought you had to swing?"

"What! You talk in riddles. Explain."

"I've got to be hung!" he roared, but whether from pain or delight, none could tell.

"Why, you didn't have nothing to do with hurting the captain?" cried Sally, as she advanced toward her beloved.

Nettleton gazed at her an instant with a most singular expression, and then replied:—

"Miss Long, never let suspicion cross that delicate bo—mind of yours, but like the true turtle-dove, put your trust in the uprightness of your future lord and master, what is to be hanged all on account of the first time you wrapped them delicate arms of yours around my long neck."

"William, what do you mean by being hanged?" asked the General.

Nettleton then went on to relate the agreement he had made with Price, to return and undergo the punishment which was about to be inflicted upon him when that general interfered. He declared his intention of returning at once, as his "furlough" had run out, and as a "man of honour" he must return.

"And do you really intend to return?" asked the General.

"Of course I do!" replied William, with something of scorn and much of pride in his tones.

"William, think for a moment. You are now safe. You are with one who loves you, and with whom you can be happy. Why will you return!"

"General, don't argue this point with me. I said I would come back, and darn me if I don't!" Nettleton started, after having shook the hands of his friends.

"Stay a moment, Nettleton," said the General. "I have a letter from General Price with regard to you."

Nettleton paused and listened, as the commander, opening the envelope, read:—

"Camp, near Cassville, Nov. 12.

"To the General Commanding, greeting:—

"A prisoner of war was released from our camp, and permitted to return to Springfield, on the 9th. It was at first thought that he was a spy, as he had been seen in and near our camp before, and he was about to suffer death upon the scaffold, when I saw and questioned him. I became convinced that he was no spy, but a faithful servant and friend, searching for his captain, whom he loved. I ordered his release. I gave him a parole of honour. He promised to return, that the sentence of the 'drum-head court' might be carried into effect upon him, after he had given the evidence he possessed, which he declared was necessary to save an innocent man. I admire his truthfulness. Should he be determined to return, of which I have no doubt, you will read this letter, which releases William Nettleton from any further obligation. He will remain with his friends, and be happy.

"Signed by the A. A. A. G.,

"For the Commander, PRICE."

The effect upon the gallant fellow of the reading of

this letter was somewhat singular. He stood for a moment gaping round upon the spectators, as if he had been caught in some mean act. Then a smile came over 'his face, like sunlight creeping over a rugged mountain top.' Soon his countenance looked like a newly risen sun—fairly blazing with blushes. Then with a wild whoop, which rung out like a signal, he sprung into the air, rattled his feet together, and, once on earth again, bounded off like a great moose for the nearest thicket, where to indulge his "feelings" without restraint or observation.

The crowd dispersed in good-humour, to talk over the strange events of an hour. If one heart was happier than all, it was that of poor Mamie, whose joy at the proven innocence of her friend and lover was too intense for words. In her heart a new hope had also arisen, that her dear brother would again be restored to her arms, and thus fill up the cup of her blessings to the brim.

It had been decided by the friends of Hayward that a search for the captain would be useless, but it was hoped that Charles Campbell would give some information which would lead to his discovery, or that Fall-leaf, a celebrated Indian scout, who had now been absent many days on the very line of the enemy's march, would return with some tidings, by which the actions of the captain's anxious friends should be governed.

The Army of the Mississippi, having passed from Fremont's command to that of General Hunter, had been ordered to fall back from Springfield, in two columns. The one by the way of the Osage and Warsaw to Tipton, Mo., on the line of the main Pacific road, and the other by way of Lebanon, on the main road between Springfield and Rolla, the south-western branch of the

same road. Each place, in distance from Springfield, was about one hundred and twenty-five miles.

The march of the division to which Captain Hayward's friends were attached, which was under the command of the brave Sigel, was commenced on the morning of November 20th. That division formed the rear of the entire army. It proceeded by the Rolla turnpike.

Nothing of note transpired until the division was ascending the rolling hill about two miles before reaching Lebanon, when a horseman, his face and head streaming with blood, rode rapidly along the lines, exclaiming :—

“Fight in front! Fight in front!”

He halted for no one to question him, but kept on his way. No guns were heard, and many expressed the opinion that it must be a strange fight. But, as a necessary precaution, the infantry-men were halted, their pieces loaded, and bayonets fixed. The artillery was charged, and the flags unfurled. As the troops ascended the hill, and looked in vain for a foe, the question was asked : “Where is the fight?”

This was soon settled, as another messenger rode up and informed the general that a party or squadron of rebel cavalry, numbering about four hundred, had attacked a little band of “home guards,” of about thirty, which had been collected in a valley some twenty miles south of Lebanon, on the main road, in a place called “Bohannon Mills Valley.” Most of the thirty “home guard” had been killed, wounded, or dispersed by the guerillas. Then all families known to entertain Union proclivities were visited at the dead of night. “Murder and arson!” was the cry. Many poor creatures soon were in the agonies of death. Husbands, who had rushed from concealment to defend their wives, had been cloven to the

earth; children ran shrieking to and fro, only to be dashed to pieces by the savages of the Missouri Mountain. It was a carnival of lust and blood, over which the historian must ever dwell in horror. And yet, these fiends in human shape were protected by the ægis of the "Confederate" flag!

Such was the scene depicted by the messenger, when the division was halted, and a consultation took place. It was decided that, while the main army went forward, two companies of infantry, a section of artillery, and a company of cavalry, should be detached to proceed at once to "Bohannon Mills," to protect the helpless families, and if possible, to punish the rebel horde which had committed such awful crimes against humanity.

CHAPTER VIII.

GONE!—THE SIGNAL SONG.

WE must now take the reader back to Springfield. It was one week after the exposure and confinement of Walker, and something like a month before the army had commenced its retrograde movement, as described in the foregoing chapter.

Walker, after the first paroxysm of his rage was over, settled himself down to think. Although he had shown a bold front at first, his final conviction drove from his heart all resolution, and he evinced the most abject cowardice—the cowardice of conscious guilt, which makes the strongest tremble.

But Walker was not a man to sit quietly in his cell, and submit to his fate. His mind having been settled in the conviction that certain death would follow, he began to form his plans of action. To arrive at any definite

conclusion was no easy matter, as he was chained, and a double guard placed around his quarters. Yet he had hope—time was given, and all might yet be right. He learned that he was not to be tried by a divisional court-martial, but would be removed to St. Louis, in order that a general court might act upon his case. He also learned that it would be at least a month before the army would take up its march. Thus he had time—time precious to him—for, like all shrewd villains, he had his confederates, even in the army as well as out of it, and to these he now looked for his bodily safety.

It was the third night of his incarceration, that, springing to his feet, he listened intently. There were three distinct taps on the door.

"The rescuers—the gang—I'm saved!" he muttered, as he gave three taps on the door in response.

"What's the word?" was asked from the outside.

"C. S. A. and the Bars!" answered Walker. "And you?"

"Good! Union against oppression!"

"To-night?" asked Walker, with eagerness.

"No, the pal on the other side ain't for Union. Can't before the day after to-morrow. Jim goes on then, and though it ain't my turn, I think I can get pony No. 2 drunk, and the job can be done. I'll try."

"Be cautious. Trust no one without the word. It was the neglect on my part, thinking it all right, to demand the 'word,' which brought me into this scrape!"

The "rounds" approached, and the sentinel was relieved.

Nothing of importance transpired in camp for the next three days. An unusual quiet prevailed. It is true, there was much talk upon the subject of the at-

tempted murder, and many expressions of bitterness against Walker. Some even went so far as to suggest the hanging of that wretch before the army left Springfield, lest he should escape. None were more vehement than a repulsive-looking soldier, known throughout the camp as "ugly Jim!" He stated that he had been on guard only a few nights before in front of the prisoner's quarters, and that he had every reason to believe Walker was trying to escape, adding that he wished he had been satisfied of the fact, as he would have been glad of an opportunity to put a bullet through the murderous scoundrel.

The party had been drinking freely, and had become exceedingly communicative. One of the soldiers, whose post was No. 1 on guard duty that night—that is, in front of the prisoner's door—swore he would shoot Walker if he could find any pretext.

"You have no spite against him," exclaimed ugly Jim, "and I have. Let me take the matter in hand. I will stand your guard, and if the villain attempts to move, I'll riddle him, sure as Potosi lead mines."

"Enough said. I am on the second relief. I go on at seven and off at nine; again at twelve and off at two. This will be your time."

"Good! I shall be on hand!"

Ugly Jim then approached the tent of Miss Hayward, and requested an audience alone with that lady. It so happened that she was alone, Alibamo having gone to visit her husband, and Sally being at the time strolling through the camp with Nettleton.

"If you wish to learn all the particulars about your brother, I think you can do so," said Jim, in a tone of great kindness.

"Oh! in what manner?" asked Miss Hayward, eagerly.

"I don't exactly know. But I will tell you what I do know. You see I am on guard to-night from twelve till two, over the cell of Walker. I don't like the villain any way, but he told me if I would get you to come to him, he would tell you all he knows of the matter!"

"Certainly I will go. Call Alibamo, and we will go together at once!"

"I will," answered Jim, as he turned to depart. Then pausing, he added:—

"Miss Hayward, now I recollect that Walker said you must come alone. He declared he would not commit himself by speaking before any one."

"I dare not go alone!"

"Poor child!" exclaimed Jim, as he wiped his eyes. "Do you think you can be alone when this old soldier as folks call 'ugly Jim' is near you? I know my face is ugly, but I don't think my heart is! Besides, you won't see the wretch himself. You will only talk to him through a crack between the logs, and I shall be as close to you as Walker will allow. Of course, he won't let me hear what he says, but I shan't let you be out of my sight, so there will be no danger!"

"Why can we not go at once?" asked Miss Hayward.

"Because I don't go on post until twelve o'clock, and the other guard wouldn't let you speak to him."

"Then I will come at a quarter-past twelve. But I shall rely upon you for protection!"

"You may do that, miss. And I really think you do right. I know Walker is a very bad man, but he has got to die, and maybe he wants to make a confession to relieve his mind, and to ask your pardon. And I always

think it best to give a dying man a chance to relieve his mind, and confess."

"You may expect me!"

Jim bowed, and left the tent.

Twelve o'clock came; the guard was relieved, and "ugly Jim" had taken the place of his sick friend, in front of Walker's prison. All was quiet, save the clanking of a chain, a few hurried whispers, and the opening and closing of a heavy door, which sounds were in close proximity to Walker's dungeon. The words "C. S. A. and Bars" were answered by "Union against Oppression," and two dark forms glided to concealment beside the thorn hedge, while the guard remained at the door.

The evening dragged slowly along for Miss Hayward. A hundred times she had almost resolved to communicate to her friends the fact of her intended visit to Walker, and to ask their advice, and, if need be, to request that some one should follow in the distance, to lend assistance, should any be required. But what had she to fear? Walker was secure in his cell, and one of the faithful guard had promised his protection. Besides, she had promised to go alone. If she did not, it would imply suspicion of an honest soldier. Walker might also ask if she had come entirely unattended, and how could she answer him?

Miss Hayward was naturally timid, and by no means self-reliant. When the news of the supposed death of her brother reached her, she was almost paralyzed with grief. But, now that hope had filled her heart, she began to nerve herself to the task of unremitting search, even though she must encounter the greatest dangers.

The hour of twelve arrived. Closely muffled in a cloak, she crept from her tent, and then paused to listen. She

heard nothing, save the slow and regular breathing of the sleepers, and the violent beating of her own heart. She started, but her steps seemed to fail her, and she leaned against a tree for support. The thoughts of her dear brother, and the probable unravelling of the mystery which surrounded his attempted assassination and his present fate, gave her renewed courage, and she sped onward. In a few moments she had cleared the camp, and arrived in the centre of the garden, where stood the doomed man's prison. As she neared the door, the guard asked :—

“ Is that you, Miss Hayward ? ”

“ It is ! ” came the low response.

“ Approach, and fear nothing.”

She had barely reached the threshold, when two forms, darting from beneath the hedge, threw a heavy blanket over her head, thus entirely smothering any attempt on her part to give the alarm. Who and what her captors were she could not divine, or what might be their purpose. Strange to say, her reason did not forsake her. She felt herself borne rapidly along, but not a word was spoken. It appeared to her that hours passed by, and she even longed to hear some word uttered which might give a clue to the intentions of those in whose power she was, or to throw some light upon the subject as to whom her captors were. The blanket, which was very heavy, almost causing suffocation, had been removed, and a lighter one substituted.

At length the parties halted, and, seating themselves upon the ground, the covering was removed, and Miss Hayward was permitted to gaze around her. Her eyes first met those of Captain Walker. She shuddered, and turned away. Then glancing at his two companions, she

at once recognised "ugly Jim," and a person known in camp as "stupid Dick," both of whom had served as Union soldiers, for a long time, under Walker. As her eyes met those of "ugly Jim," she exclaimed :—

" Oh ! you will protect me ! "

A laugh was the only reply.

" I trust Miss Hayward will permit me to become her protector ! " said Walker, in an assumed tone of kindness.

Miss Hayward did not reply, but gazed around her. She was in a wild spot. She was seated beside a lovely stream of water, in a deep valley, while high on either hand were ragged hills or mountains. She knew the country for at least ten or twelve miles from Springfield in all directions was quite level, and she judged she must be near the Ozark country, the first range of whose ridges she had frequently seen from that point.

" Does not the lovely Miss Hayward deign a reply to her most devoted lover ? " asked Walker.

" What was your purpose in tearing me from my friends, and conveying me here ? " asked Miss Hayward.

" A pardonable one, I think. My life was forfeited in the Federal camp, and personal interest required me to depart. I could not think of leaving without you, and so I resorted to a little stratagem. My love for you must plead my excuse."

" But I have told you, Captain Walker, that I could not love you. Do you suppose after what has transpired that I could entertain any other feelings towards you than detestation ? "

" I am aware of that. But, when you know me better, I am sure you will consent to reward my devotion. I am going to convey you to your brother ! "

" Then I will thank you, at least ! " she exclaimed.

"Nothing else?"

She shuddered.

"I must be plain with you," continued Walker. "I am not what I have seemed to be while with the Federals. I am a colonel in the Confederate army, but I accepted a commission in the so-called Union army, that I might furnish information to my generals. Or, if you like the term better, you may call me a spy. These two soldiers have been with me for the same purpose. And we are not alone. There are now, in the army of the Mississippi, over three hundred privates, and over twenty officers, who pretend loyalty to the Federal cause; and I think that Captain Hayward, when his sister has become the wife of Captain Walker, or Colonel Brown, may be induced to join us!"

"Will you take me to my brother?"

"On one condition, I will."

"And this condition?"

"Miss Hayward, I love you with all the ardour of my soul. You have become necessary to my very existence—are a part of my life. When you spurned me, it drove me frantic, and I am so now. Beware,—oh! beware how you turn this heart, which is yet pure, so far as you are concerned, into a hell of furies! Pity me! Oh! dear Miss Hayward, pity me!"

"But my brother—what of him?"

"I will tell you of your brother when you have answered my questions."

"Proceed, sir!"

"Do not speak so coldly. I will be frank with you. Your brother is a prisoner—not in the Confederate camp, but in a secure place, on the very stream beside which you are now sitting. The murmuring and singing of

these very waters will, ere two hours, greet his ears with the same strain. Warble those strains to which I have so often listened while in camp, and which stirred my soul, and they will be borne direct to your brother's hearing, to relieve his brain perhaps from the insanity which now enchains him !”

“ Insanity !” echoed Mamie. “ My brother insane ?”

“ He is a raving maniac ! And but one thing can restore him !”

“ Oh wretched, horrible news ! What can I do to save my brother ?”

“ You are the only person who can save him. Nor is the task a hard one. Only a few miles from here is a Confederate camp. A chaplain is in attendance. He will perform the ceremony which will make you irrevocably and securely mine. Go with me. Become my wife, and to-morrow I will take you to your brother, and we will not only restore his shackled feet to liberty, but his shattered senses to reason. We alone can do it. Can you assume the responsibility of a refusal ?”

Miss Hayward remained silent for a few moments, and then gazed alternately at these three villains. An unnatural fire lit up her eyes. At length she said :—

“ Captain Walker, I do not know but you are even now deceiving me. You may not know anything about where my brother is.”

“ Ask these soldiers,” replied Walker.

Miss Hayward turned her eyes upon them.

“ The captain speaks right,” answered Jim. “ He does know where your brother is. He is crazy, and is chained in the—”

“ Silence !” commanded Walker. “ Do you believe, Miss Mamie ?”

"I must believe the worst," answered Miss Hayward. "Soldiers," she added, turning to the soldiers, "do you believe in the truth of Captain Walker's profession of love for me?"

"I should like to know why not!" replied ugly Jim, doggedly. "Nobody could help loving you; even I loves you, but I know its no use, and so I don't say nothing!"

"What have you to say?" asked Mamie, turning to the other soldier.

"Lord, Miss Mamie, I allers loved you, but 'stupid Dick' never thinks of such as you, and so I acted mean, just to spite!"

"Gentlemen," cried Miss Hayward, springing to her feet, "listen to me. You have wronged me deeply, by aiding this wretched villain, your captain, to abduct me. I despise, loathe him; and, sooner than become his wife, I would permit my brother to die as he is, for I know that he would curse me were I to save him at such a sacrifice. It will be but death, and I shall suffer very little, for my brother's pure soul will scarce have taken its flight ere mine will follow!"

"Miss Hayward!"

"Silence, Captain Walker. Soldiers, you have human hearts, and this man has not. I appeal to you. Save me! Find my brother and return him safely, and I promise to pay you one thousand dollars each. If I fail to do this, I swear, by the hope of heaven, that I will become the wife of one of you, the choice to be decided by lots between you!"

These words acted like an electric shock upon the soldiers. They sprung to their feet and confronted Walker. But he had anticipated the effect of her words, and stood sword and revolver in hand.

"You would play me false!" demanded Walker, fiercely.

"Guess I would!" replied Jim.

"Take that then!" yelled Walker.

The report of a pistol echoed through the valley, and Jim fell without so much as a groan.

"And how do you decide?" asked Walker, turning and pointing his revolver toward Dick.

"I was only goin' to help you. I ain't no such foolish cuss as to think of marrying a fine lady like that! I'm all right!"

"Prove yourself so, and you shall have your thousand. Deceive me, and you share his fate!"

As Walker spoke he stepped to a clump of thick bushes, and drew a small boat from concealment. Handing Miss Hayward to a seat, and preceded by Dick, Walker entered, and the little craft swept gently along with the current, down the stream.

They had proceeded but a short distance, when Miss Hayward burst forth, and sung a wild, thrilling air, which echoed far and wide through the valley and across the hills. There was something strangely beautiful in her song, and something still more strange in her actions. As each strain echoed over the hills, and gave back the ringing notes, she would start, and listen attentively, and a gleam of joy would lighten up her pale face, upon which a shade of disappointment would almost as soon appear. Her hearers sat gazing at her in silence, and in apparent wonder.

"Those words are significant," exclaimed Walker.

"What is their import?"

"She's going mad too, I opine!" exclaimed Dick, "Better let her go!"

"Silence!" cried Walker. "Miss Hayward, do you think your voice will penetrate his retreat?"

She made no answer, but, as the little boat swept onward, ever and anon the same words, and the same wild music broke the stillness of the forest, now sounding like a wail of sorrow, and then becoming almost hushed in hopeful expectation. The words had the appearance of being extemporized for the occasion, and were as follows:—

Break those fetters—I am calling—
Listen only to my song!
I am waiting—loved one—waiting!
I have waited—oh, so long!
Give but one fond word to cheer me,
As I pray, and hope, and weep!
Let thy echo say thou'rt near me,
As my vigils thus I keep!
Echo, as along I glide,
This my song from thy retreat,
And I'll bound to thy dear side!
Are we e'er again to meet?
Yes, a Scraph from on high
Whispers to me, thou art nigh!
Friends are waiting—friends are near—
Dearest brother—do not fear!

CHAPTER IX.

THE PURSUIT—THE PERILOUS SITUATION—IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

It was two o'clock in the morning, nearly two hours after Miss Hayward had been seized and borne from the camp by Walker and his confederates. The guard relief had commenced its rounds. The first post visited was that in front of the door where Walker had been confined. A glance revealed the prisoner's escape. The chain which had secured the door was lying upon the steps, and the door itself was slightly ajar. Walker and both

the sentinels had disappeared. The "long roll" was at once beaten, and the camp aroused. Scarce had the lines been formed when it was announced that Miss Hayward also had disappeared. The grief of her friends and the rage of the soldiers knew no bounds, and many was the oath of a terrible retribution uttered against the fiend who had spread such desolation and sorrow in her path.

It was but a few moments before squads of cavalry were dashing in every direction in pursuit. There was but little doubt as to how the escape had been effected. The disappearance of the guard convinced all that they were in league with Walker, but in what manner they had gained possession of Miss Hayward was a mystery. No one had detected anything unusual in her manner the evening before, and she had retired at her usual hour.

It was thought, however, that the parties would not have taken any main road, as the pickets would have given the alarm. They could not have had more than two hours the start, as everything was all right when the twelve o'clock relief went on post, and at two o'clock the escape was discovered. If Walker had to walk through the fields in order to avoid the pickets, it would take at least two hours to clear them. It was most likely that, once outside the lines, friends and horses would be procured. Still, the distance would not be so great but the horsemen hoped to overtake them, and so they set off with a good will in various directions.

"Are you not going to accompany us?" asked Lieutenant Wells of Nettleton, who was seated upon the ground, looking gloomy and sullen.

"Not by a darn sight!" answered Nettleton, doggedly.

"And why not?" asked Wells.

"You go 'long, and let me alone!" he answered.

There was no time for words, and the squadron departed.

The night passed, during which Nettleton was bitter in his self-reproach for not watching closer, and would not hold conversation with any person. As the first dawn of day became visible, Nettleton was seen crawling upon his hands and knees in front of the former prison of Walker, and through the garden toward the west. His movements were watched with considerable interest, as all had begun to respect him for his sagacity in his peculiar way. At length he returned to his tent, and, without speaking, carefully examined his double-barrel shot gun—a beautiful piece which he had picked up upon the Wilson creek battle-ground, and had been permitted to retain. This he loaded; then, taking a large artillery ammunition-bag, he went directly to the tent of Adjutant Hinton. Removing the lid of a Minnie ball ammunition-box, he filled this pouch with cartridges. His next move was to place some provision in his haversack; then he started.

“Where are you going, William?” asked Mrs. Hinton.

“Them boots!” he replied, pointing in the direction he had just taken in hands-and-knees examination.

“What do you mean?”

“Why, them boots as had two hearts on the soles went that way, and I’m going to follow if I go to thunder!” He waited to hear no more, or to speak more, but bounded off to the westward.

He had been gone perhaps an hour, when Fall-leaf, the Indian scout already referred to, entered the camp. He was soon made aware of the state of things. Fall-leaf was deeply attached to Captain Hayward, and more especially so to his fair sister, Mamie. The scout had

been but a short time in camp, when he had given to the General all the information he possessed with regard to the enemy. This done, he followed on the trail as fast as possible.

For several hours Nettleton kept on his course, now striking the main road for the purpose of searching for fresh tracks, then taking to the woods again, to avoid observation. Several times he came upon the well-known footprints, and a bitter exclamation would escape him. He kept his course, more from the judgment he had formed as to the direction Walker had taken than the numerous impressions of his boots. He was ascending a sharp and ragged hill, so heavily covered with the thorn-bush and small scrub-oak peculiar to that country that his progress was rendered very difficult. Suddenly, a figure darted in front of him and concealed itself among the thick undergrowth. Nettleton brought his gun to the shoulder, and called out:—

"None of that skulking, darn ye! Come out and fight fair!"

"Ugh!" responded the voice, and Fall-leaf bounded to his side.

"Oh! it's you, is it, Mr. Ingen? Well, I'm darn glad you've come, for you can hunt these snarly woods better than me. Any news?"

"You kill 'em—eh?"

"I shall kill 'em, if I only get a bead on the critter!"

"You did kill 'em?"

"Kill who?"

"Dead soldier—there!" Fall-leaf indicated that he meant further on.

"Come on, Ingen," said Nettleton. He reached the

summit of the hill which overlooked the valley below, and, led by Fall-leaf, began its descent. They soon reached the stream, and the Indian pointed to the dead body. Nettleton gazed upon it a moment, and then said :—

“Darn me if it ain’t the very feller what run away last night. Walker has been here, sure !”

He commenced his search at once. He found foot-prints in the sand, and among them that of a lady, judging from its small size. The Indian had also been taking observations. Returning from a clump of bushes, he said to Nettleton :—

“See—canoe—two—White Bird—so !”

Here Fall-leaf indicated by action that two men had drawn a boat from concealment in the thicket, had entered it, as indicated by tracks in the sand, and had proceeded down-stream.

“Well, they’ve got rid of one scoundrel, anyway. It will only be man to man, and I feel myself to be a match for any dozen such skunks as that Walker. They can’t have much the start.”

Both Fall-leaf and Nettleton walked rapidly forward along the bank of the stream. At length—and it was almost a simultaneous movement on the part of each—they stopped, and bending forward, held their ears close to the ground.

“By thunder !” cried Nettleton, “that’s her voice !”

“White Bird caged—she no sing !” replied Fall-leaf.

“Ain’t you a darn fool ? Don’t you know that White Bird, as you call her, has got a right to expect some of her friends will be after her, and so she sings that they may hear her voice, echoing up and down among these hills, and know where to find her ?”

“Ugh ! good—white hunter no fool !”



Again the voice was heard, and this time so clearly as to leave no doubt upon the mind of our hero as to who the singer was. Like a deer he bounded off in the direction indicated. The music died away and all was still. But the two men paused not.

Upon a sudden they emerged into an open field or about four acres, near the centre of which were two large stacks of hay. The river at this point took a bend, and the two pursuers struck directly across the open space. Just as they reached the stacks, Fall-leaf darted close in to the base of one of them, taking the attitude of a listener, and making a significant sign to Nettleton.

"What is it?" asked Nettleton.

"Hark! Soldiers! Horses! Whoa! Hark!"

Nettleton listened attentively, and then said:—

"There is a party of soldiers coming. It may be our men who have been in search of Miss—of the White Bird; but it is well enough to keep close. It may be the rebels merely moving camp. And if this is so, Mamie must be with them. The sounds are coming nearer—crawl under the hay, red-skin—way under, out of sight."

This was effected with some difficulty, when a party of rebel guerillas, numbering about sixty, rode into the field, and proceeded to form their camp directly in the vicinity of the haystacks, under which the two men were concealed.

"Well, I guess we've got into the right shop!" said Nettleton to Fall-leaf. "We are cooped up here close enough for awhile, but Miss Mamie must be with this crowd, and when dark comes we can scout around and see what we can do. Lay quiet, Ingen!"

"White hunter knows! Make good Ingen!"

The day dragged slowly away. Toward night a party

of the rebels came for forage for their horses, but the hay was tumbled from the top of the stack, and our friends were not discovered. The guerillas' conversation, however, was listened to with the greatest interest by Nettleton.

"So Colonel Brown—or Walker, as he is called—came within one of being done for in the camp of the Yanks at Springfield?"

"Yes, so he says."

"What the devil does he want with the gal?"

"Oh, some love affair, of course."

"The gal was happy, for she was singing like a nightingale."

"Oh yes! No doubt she was dazzled by the prospect of being a colonel's wife."

"Who is she?"

"Don't know."

"My eyes! but she is a beauty!"

"So much the better for him."

"Where was he going with her?"

"Oh, below—taking her to her brother, I believe."

"Where is that?"

"Down in the old mill!"

This was all the conversation heard by the adventurers. But, the rebel troops did not move again until late in the next day, and our friends were compelled to remain quiet. They had learned sufficient to convince them that Miss Hayward was not with the band of rebels, but was being borne still further from them. They cursed the chance which had thus entrapped them, and prevented their overtaking the captive at once. Still, they resolved to keep up the pursuit, and they had learned that the lady was to be conveyed to some mill, and that

her brother was there. Patiently they waited until they could emerge and finish their journey.

CHAPTER X.

HAYWARD.

It is time the reader was enlightened, somewhat, as to the fate of Captain Hayward.

The wound he had received the night of the attempted assassination was severe, but by no means fatal. The loss of blood had rendered him very weak, and for some time he remained insensible.

At the moment the blow was inflicted, there was, upon the other bank of the river, and watching the Federals, a squad of rebel cavalry scouts. The water into which Hayward was thrown soon revived the wounded man. He was seen by this band, and carried to the house of an officer of the Confederate army, not half a mile from the spot. Here his wound was dressed. It was not long before an order reached them, signed by "Colonel Brown," to convey him to the camp of Colonel Price, at Ozark. This order was law, and immediately after the Federals left Grand Prairie, a boat was procured and Hayward placed in it. But half conscious, he reached the Ozark bridge at the critical juncture already described in the chapter referring to the interview between Nettie Morton and Charles Campbell, and the interruption by Colonel Price, the rescue of Nettie by Fall-leaf, the approach of the Union forces, and the resolve of Charles Campbell to save the wounded captain.

It was at the moment when Price was in pursuit of the Indian that Campbell, taking advantage of his absence, and observing the approach of the Federals, hastily penned

the note previously referred to, and then pushed off with the boat, down the stream, in order to effect his escape with the prisoner.

He began to hope that success would crown his efforts. The battle favoured his flight. All that day and the night following he pursued his course. It was his purpose to follow the Gasconade until he had reached the point nearest Rolla, where he supposed he would be free from the roving bands of rebels, who were so numerous in the vicinity of Springfield. But his hopes were doomed to disappointment. Colonel Price, anticipating the direction he had taken, immediately despatched one Lieutenant Lewis, a most tireless wretch, with a squad of ten men, to intercept Campbell and the prisoner-captain.

Just as the morning dawned, Campbell saw the pursuing party approaching. Pulling for the shore, he lifted Captain Hayward in his arms, and bore him into a mill, which stood near at hand. There he quickly concealed his charge in an upper loft, and returned to meet the rebels. He stated he had been captured by a party of the Federals, and conveyed to that point, and that they had there released him upon his parole of honour. This story was generally believed, although one of the band appeared to be incredulous, and left his fellows for a pretended search. Not observing his absence, the remainder of the rebel band returned without him, taking care, however, that Campbell was not left behind.

When this person entered the mill, he found Hayward leaning upon his elbow, quite conscious, but too weak to move. He paused before the wounded man, and was silent. Hayward saw, and recognized him.

"Are friends near?" was his feeble question.

"I am the only friend you have got in these parts,

and I reckon as how 'ugly Jim' ain't just the man you want to see!"

"You are one of my own men?" returned Hayward.

"That's a p'int as will admit of some argument, as the lawyers say. I may be your man when I am in Springfield, but you are my man now. So don't kick up any fuss, and after I have made you fast, I'll tell you the rest. Ha, ha!" he muttered to himself, "but Walker shall pay me well for this!"

Saying this the rebel rascal left the mill. Not far from this mill, in a wretched log-hut, lived an old woman, who gloried in the title of "Crazy Madge," and of whom the rude backwoods people of the vicinity stood in fear, as it was almost universally believed among them that she was possessed of the devil. She told fortunes with great correctness, and employed the most singular modes in doing this, such as burning powder and strange incense, and the uttering of fearful imprecations and unearthly sounds.

The mill was owned by one Bohannan, a captain of Confederate guerillas. Since the commencement of the war it had not been in operation, except on rare occasions. About one mile above Bohannan's mill, there was another mill, of smaller dimensions, which had formerly been owned by a thorough Union man, who, becoming a refugee, had abandoned this mill also. So when the residents in that region, or any of the straggling rebel bands, had occasion to grind their grain, they always went to the upper mill, more especially as it was believed that "Crazy Madge" had taken full possession of the lower one after its proprietor left, and that, being occupied in sacrilegious rites, it was very generally believed to be unsafe to venture in that vicinity. Even the most reckless

and hardy of the guerillas held the spot in awe, and avoided it at all times.

Madge was seated in her own door when Campbell entered the mill with Hayward in his arms. She watched him closely, but uttered no word. She saw him emerge, and meet the rebel band. She watched their departure, and then discovered the new-comer, "Grouse Green," as he was known. When he came forth from the mill, Madge still was seated in the cabin doorway, smoking her pipe. She did not even raise her eyes, or pretend the least consciousness of his presence, until, with a rude slap upon her shoulder, he said :—

"Come, old woman, I want you !"

The old creature pretended not the least surprise, but, raising her snake-like eyes to those of the speaker, she said :—

"Does the son of Belial wish to know his fate ? I need not the aid of my magic charms to point it out to me. In less than a month, the most horrible death—"

"Bah, you old crone ! I'd dash your brains out for a copper, you infernal croaking old buzzard ! I don't come to have my fortune told, but I want you to serve me, and you shall have gold—do you hear, old woman ? No fooling now, and gold is yours !"

"Gold ! It is the master-key to human hearts ! And what am I to do for gold ?"

"My bidding ! First, I want a set of chains ! Have you such things in your infernal den ?"

"You can have them for gold !" she exclaimed, tottering to a closet, and rattling the cold iron. "I always keep them—it is necessary to my trade ?"

"Now for the bargain, old hag. You saw me enter that mill just now ? Well, there is a captain confined, or

will be confined before I leave him, in the upper loft. He will be fastened. You must feed him daily, just enough to keep life in him. I will give you a hundred to start upon—more money than you ever saw, old woman, and when I return, if you have well done your duty as keeper, I will give you another hundred. Will you be faithful and keep the prisoner in safety?"

"I swear it by my magic art!"

"Bah! keep your art! Swear it by the gold you will receive, and I'll believe you. But come!"

Green re-entered the mill, followed by old Madge. He seized the helpless Hayward and bore him to an upper loft. There he fettered him with the chains.

"And now I shall leave you here until we can attend to you at a more convenient time!" he muttered, as he gazed exultingly upon Hayward. He was about to leave him alone.

"Stay but a moment!" cried the wounded man. "Tell me of my sister!"

"She has become the wife of Colonel Brown, of the Confederate Army, or, as you know him, Captain Walker, of the Federals!"

"Liar!" cried Hayward. "But no! I will not use such terms now. Do you know who struck the blow which so nearly deprived me of life?"

"Yes; it was William Nettleton! He is also enlisted in the service of Walker. And I will tell you more. In two days after you disappeared, Lieutenant Wells was hung for your murder. Your sister fled with Walker, who pretended the greatest friendship for her. I performed the ceremony, and to-night they are not three miles from you."

Hayward had become insensible, and sunk to the floor.

Green saw this, and motioning to the old woman, they left him alone.

"That is the game I want you to play!" said Green, as they emerged from the mill. "Of course, all I have told him is false. But I want you to carry it out, because Colonel Price wishes it as well as Walker, and as he is a most dangerous man to our cause, I don't care how poorly he gets along. It would be a good thing for us if he could never take the field again. So see that you do your duty!"

Madge received her money, and agreed to follow all the instructions he had given her.

Green now returned at once to the camp, and reported to Walker. It was just before the decision of the court-martial had been given, and that officer was free, not only from restraint, but from anything which had, as yet, assumed a definite form. He was delighted with the intelligence, and resolved to take advantage of it as soon as Wells could be thoroughly crushed.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRISON—THE WHEEL-ROOM—CAGED—THE LIFE-AND-DEATH STRUGGLE.

WE left Miss Hayward in the little boat, in the custody of Walker and stupid Dick. They encountered the party of rebels of which we have made mention, but as Walker, or Colonel Brown, was the officer highest in rank, no one attempted to interfere with his project. The boat kept its course until it came upon a broad flat, which appeared to be some five or six miles in length, and perhaps one in breadth. This, Walker informed Miss Hayward, was the "Valley of Bohannon!"

"And," said he, "your brother is confined in yonder mill!"

Miss Hayward gazed a moment upon the structure, and then burst forth in the same wild strain she had sung so frequently during her boat voyage.

"It is folly for you to attempt to attract his notice by your voice. He is a close prisoner and a maniac, and nothing but your constant presence and attention will ever cause his reason to return."

"What do you intend to do with him and myself?" asked Miss Hayward.

"I intend to take you to your brother. I intend to let you see him in a wretched garret, with no hope of recovery, or even of life, unless you come to his aid. I intend to permit you to gaze upon this scene, but not even to speak with your brother, or to assist him in any manner, until you are my wife. Then you shall be free to attend to all his wants, to provide for his comfort, to restore him to reason, to life, and to liberty."

Miss Hayward bent her head upon her hands and wept

"I will not ask for your final decision now!" continued Walker. "I will wait until you have seen your brother, which will be in a few moments."

The boat was drawn to the shore, and Walker, turning to Dick, said :—

"I will dispense with you now. Go to Joe's farm. Follow my instructions as to storing the house with provisions, and at least one comfortable bed. Miss Hayward, it is a beautiful place of which I speak, and, in case of your refusal to perform all that I wish voluntarily, or to save your brother, I shall be compelled to take advantage of a friend's mansion, in case I cannot effect my escape with you to Arkansas. This I doubt being able to do;

and more, I don't know that I shall run the risk, as I am only a subordinate, and some of my superiors might order your release. You perceive that I intend to make sure of my prize now that she is in my keeping. As my wife she will be permitted all proper liberty, but until you are such, by your own voluntary act, I must keep you safely from approach by anyone."

Dick had left his master. Walker and Miss Hayward arrived at the log-hut adjoining the mill, and entered it. Old Madge was there, but she looked pale and frightened.

"Come here, Madge. What is the matter?" asked Walker.

"The devil's broke loose!" replied Madge, trembling violently.

"Come, don't be alarmed; I am Walker, I am the one who sent you the hundred dollars to keep the man safely. You have done so, I hope."

"He has just broke loose, and run into the woods."

"How did that happen?"

"Oh, he heard a voice singing outside, and, in his fever delirium, said it was an angel calling him to heaven, and he burst from his room and rushed up yonder."

Walker and the old woman conversed together in undertones for a few moments, when he turned to Miss Hayward and said:—

"Your brother, in his delirium, broke his chains, and is at large in the mountains. He will not return here, and I think it doubtful if I can find him. He will, most likely, make his way to the Federal camp. But, come with me; you shall see where he was confined, and then learn my further intentions."

Walker seized the unresisting maiden by the arm, and drew her into the mill. Up the dirty stairs she went,

and finally entered the room, or attic, where her unfortunate brother had been detained prisoner. She shuddered as she gazed around her.

"Now," said Walker, "I will show you your room—one you shall occupy until you are Mrs. Colonel Brown."

He drew her still further on, and opened a massive door, which grated upon its hinges. She gazed in. It was a small apartment into which the carpenter usually entered when he wished to repair the great water-wheel which set the mill in motion. This room, or rather aperture, was of construction unlike any apartment intended for occupancy. There was a platform about ten feet in width, which formed the only flooring. Then a great opening beyond, through which the main wheel extended upward about eight or ten feet, entirely filling the opening in the floor. Any man confined in this apartment would find little difficulty in effecting his escape, provided he was an expert swimmer, and the mill not in motion. But the manner in which an escape must be effected would be as follows:—

When the mill was running, the wheel being then in motion, the water was thrown in large quantities in every part of the room, and its inmate could scarcely prevent drowning by catching his breath at intervals. To attempt to spring into the wheel—which was formed something like the wheel of a waggon, the rim, or tire, however, being about twenty feet in breadth, with crevices, or brackets, for catching the water which propelled it, and the braces answering as spokes bearing proportion to the rim—would almost assuredly be dashed in pieces in the attempt to gain the interior. But, once there, he would be whirled round and round until he could gather his energies for a jump when that portion of the wheel in

which he was perched was down, or nearest the bed of the stream. To leap out into the river would be a task equally perilous to that of springing in. When the wheel was not in motion, one could step into the opening, slide down the rim with great ease, spring into the water, and gain the shore in a moment.

Miss Hayward gazed into this room or vault with a fainting sickening sensation ; but she did not speak. It appeared as if hope had almost left her heart, now that she found her brother gone, and she nerved herself for any fate that might overtake her.

It was, as we have stated, late in the afternoon before the rebels encamped around the stack where Nettleton and Fall-leaf were secreted took their departure, and up to that time the two faithful pursuers were unable to venture forth. At last all was safe, and they emerged from their concealment, and gazed around them. No living person was to be seen. A meal was hastily prepared, after partaking of which they resumed their journey at a rapid rate. All night they plodded along, taking care to see that no mill was passed upon the route. As the morning dawned, they found themselves in an open space of considerable extent, and close by the stream was a mill. This was carefully examined in every nook and corner, but nothing was found. They made inquiry of a woman living in a cabin near the spot, and learned that, a mile further on, was another mill of larger dimensions, belonging to one Bohannon. For this place they immediately bent their steps. Arriving, they were met by old Madge, who immediately commenced her mummeries in order to divert their attention. The Indian gazed upon her a moment, as if half in awe and half in fear, but Net-

Nettleton did not pause. He rushed towards the entrance, and exclaimed :—

"Come along, Ingen ! I expect here's the place."

They entered the mill. The Indian remained at the door to prevent any egress, while Nettleton commenced his search. Up and down, high and low, the search was prosecuted.

Walker being then within, had observed the approach of Nettleton and the Indian. His first impulse was to fire upon them ; but he knew if his aim proved inaccurate he might then bid adieu to life, and so he resolved to resort to stratagem. He seized Miss Hayward and sprung into a wheat-bin, close by the door of the wheel-room we have described. He soon buried himself and his prisoner among the lot of old bags, husks, and refuse, and cautioned her to remain quiet, as a band of Kansas cut-throats, who regarded neither the life nor person of a pretty woman, were at hand. This had the effect to keep Miss Hayward quiet.

Nettleton had completed his search. The lower floor of the mill had been carefully scrutinized—its closets, its bins—except the small one near the wheel-room, which had escaped his notice.

"I wonder if there is anything under the mill?" queried Nettleton. "I'll call, and see if that does any good. Captain ! Captain Hayward !"

The voice was at once recognized by Miss Hayward, who vainly struggled to reply ; but Walker held a handkerchief so tightly over her mouth that she could produce no sound. At length, by a desperate effort, she removed his hand and shrieked :—

"Here, William ! here !"

"Where ? where?" cried William, springing forward.

"In the wheel-room!" yelled Walker, smothering his voice so far as to drown the exact direction in which it came.

Nettleton bounded into the wheel-room, closely followed by the Indian, who now supposed their friends to be found. Quick as lightning Walker sprang from the bin, and slammed the door upon them, bolting it securely. He then started for the mill-gate, which, being hoisted, would set the large wheel in motion.

As soon as the door was closed upon Nettleton, he rightly suspected treachery, and throwing himself with all his violence against the door, tried to force it. But in vain.

"Quick, Ingen; jump into the mill-wheel, and down into the water!"

They were about to adopt this plan of escape, when the wheel started with great rapidity, rendering it seemingly impossible to do so.

"Now," yelled Walker, as he seized Miss Mamie and bore her from the mill, "you shall see the folly of opposing me! You shall see how I triumph over all obstacles, and how those who oppose me perish!"

Inside of the mill, and near the door, was a quantity of hay and unthreshed grain, stored there for use by some neighbouring farmer or guerilla. Striking a match, Walker lit the inflammable material. In a moment it blazed high, and communicated with the woodwork. Walker only waited to see this, and then, almost dragging Miss Hayward along, he reached the river, drew the boat into the stream, and was once more floating with the current.

"Look, Miss Mamie, is not that a lovely sight?" he cried, pointing to the mill, now thoroughly enveloped in

flames. "Nettleton is there, and Fall-leaf is there, and they have been brought there by you. They will perish in those flames, and you must be responsible for their murder. When will you learn that it is useless to oppose me, and cease to do so? To submit to my proper and honourable requests is the only way you can save your friends."

When Nettleton and Fall-leaf found their mode of escape thus cut off, they naturally turned to each other for advice. But the water thrown from the wheel so blinded and choked them that they could not hold conversation at all. It was not long before our prisoners became aware of the fact, that however disagreeable the water might be, they were likely to be visited by an element, and that very soon, far more disagreeable under the present circumstances. The flames were seizing upon every part of the mill, and all around them soon became a mass of lurid, destroying light. The rafters, flooring and upper work threatened to fall at any moment. Still the room in which our friends were confined remained unscathed, surrounded as it was by water. But it must soon yield to the fiery element. The wheel still moved; yet it seemed as if its speed was somewhat lessened. At length Nettleton yelled:—

"Ingen, I'm going; take your chances!"

With a bound he sprang into the wheel. He escaped any severe blow, but upon alighting he was tossed, and pitched, and tumbled over, until at last, catching upon the centre-bar, he held himself until he had made his calculation as to where his next jump should be. At last he ventured the hazardous leap, and was precipitated into the foaming waters beneath the wheel, which in its revolution struck him lightly, calling forth a grumble or a

grunt. But Nettleton battled bravely with the rushing waters, and at length, half dead with suffocation, he crawled upon the bank as the burning rafters of the mill were falling around him.

"Wal, I suppose Ingen is roasted alive, and I must do the work alone. I'm darn sorry. And I've lost my gun, too. But I ought to be glad that I didn't lose myself. The villain! but won't I roast him if ever I lay these hands on him!"

Thus he muttered, as he sat for a moment gazing upon the appalling spectacle before him. He then sprung up, and seeing the old woman, at once started for the cabin. Madge met him at the door.

"Will you have my services to tell you truly the fortune that is in store for you?" she asked.

"Your services. Yaas; I'll have you tell me all about affairs here in this quarter, and if you don't own up everything, I'll put you in this pile of logs and roast you, as sure as you are a she woman. Do you understand?"

"I have but little to reveal of the circumstances to which you refer. The Federal officer was in the mill a prisoner, but escaped, in his delirium, and is now somewhere out in the mountain. Walker and the lady were in the mill, but are now out of reach, down stream. This is all I know."

"And it is enough. Now, you just fork over a good Minnie musket—I know you have a dozen concealed here for the use of your friends—and all the fixin for settlin' the hash of your friend, Captain Walker, for him and me has an account to fix what will require powder and lead, if this bread-cutter of mine don't do the job," he said, handling his bowie-knife.

Madge only too well read in Nettleton's face the reso-

lute nature of the man, and with scarcely a moment's hesitancy went out of the hut to a hollow tree near by, and produced from thence an armful of arms, made up of shot-guns, old-fashioned rifles, and a Minnie musket. From these Nettleton selected, after careful scrutiny, a heavy double-barrel squirrel gun. Ammunition was also supplied by the woman without hesitancy, and the pursuer found himself equipped in a most formidable manner.

"There, old gal, you have done the right thing. It is well that you did, for, as sure as lizards, I should have burned you in your pen if you hadn't forked over what I know'd was in your possession. Now, good-by, and behave yourself. If the captain—my captain I mean—comes back to you, do you be kind to him, for I tell you it is for your best interests to be so. Do you believe that?"

"I believe anything you say," replied the old creature, betraying her anxiety to get rid of her visitor.

"You do, eh? Well, jist keep on thinking so, for I shall, mayhap, want to use you again some of these days. So good-by, and keep your eyes clean."

With this injunction, he started again for the river, following the stream for some distance, but finally, for some reason best known to himself, took to the mountains. Every few moments he would pause and listen, as if a faint sound met his ears, and then continue his journey.

After Nettleton had escaped from the mill, Fall-leaf began to look around for some other means of escape. He felt sure that Nettleton's leap must be a fatal one—that, if he was not dashed to pieces by the wheel, he would surely be drowned in the rushing waters. All chance of escape for the poor Indian appeared quite as

hopeless. The flames were already hissing around him and curling up the sides of his prison-house. The fire had weakened the boards, and, just as the flames were coiling around his form, he made a desperate effort, and burst the siding from the mill. In an instant he sprung through the aperture, although the fiery element presented a formidable obstacle between himself and safety. He alighted, however, with only a few slight bruises, and, waiting for nothing, bounded forward. He knew, if Walker had continued his journey down the river, he could soon overtake him. For an hour he did not slacken his pace, and finally, in turning a short bend in the river, he beheld the boat.

He was about to dash forward to the rescue of Miss Hayward, but he remembered that he had no gun, his only weapon being his sheath-knife, while Walker was well armed. He must resort to stratagem. His object was to watch for opportunity, and when Walker should land, or when the boat neared the shore, and the thicket favoured the movement, to spring upon him suddenly, and drive the knife to his heart. But the river gradually grew wider, and Walker kept his boat in the centre, too far distant from shore for any attempt for his seizure to prove successful. All that day and all the night following, the boat drifted on with the stream. It was evident Walker was anxious to reach a certain point as quickly as possible.

The morning dawned just as the little craft shot past the ford on the Rolla turnpike, near the "ghost swamp," a locality of weird interest and novel character. Walker was about to land near a small farmhouse which stood behind a jutting hill, entirely concealed from the main road, but, before touching the shore, his quick eye caught

sight of a dark form creeping cautiously along the bank. At the same moment he discovered three horses tied in a thicket only a short distance from the house. Whether they belonged to friend or foe he could not tell; but the fact of seeing the creeping form rendered him cautious, and he immediately pulled for the opposite shore, where he landed.

"Are you friend or foe to the Confederates?" shouted Walker from the opposite side of the stream.

There was no response.

"That cursed Dick must have betrayed me," he muttered. "But I will match them yet. Come!"

He dragged Miss Hayward along up the mountain steep. At length he reached a point of rock which extended far over the valley below. A narrow footway, not more than ten inches in width, forming a kind of shelf in the rock, led into an immense cavern, which is known in that region as the "Silver Cave." Just in front of this cave was a large, flat rock, forming an overhanging platform, but to reach this, or the mouth of the cave, required great care, as the narrow path was the only manner in which an entrance or exit could be effected. Into this place Walker conveyed Miss Hayward.

Walker had, when meeting the rebels two days before, provided his boat well with provisions. These he conveyed with him into the cavern.

He had not observed, however, that he was followed closely, and that the Indian arrived at the narrow passageway just as the rebel and his prisoner entered the cave. This was so. The Indian crept up as closely as possible, and peered over the projecting point which shut Walker from his view. He was observed.

"And who are you?" yelled Walker.

The Indian was perfectly familiar with the cave. He knew no person could leave it by the narrow shelf or pathway. He could keep himself concealed, and if Walker passed a certain point, before he could bring his gun to bear, he could strike him dead. Walker was a prisoner, with a watchful and relentless keeper. The Indian replied :—

“ Ah, White Bird ! Fall-leaf here ! Fall-leaf save ! ”

“ Is it indeed my friend Fall-leaf ? ” cried Miss Hayward, joyfully.

“ Yes ; Fall-leaf save you ! ”

“ Where is William Nettleton ? ” asked Mamie.

“ Gone—gone ! ”

“ Ah ! then I have only you to encounter ! ” yelled Walker, “ and, if the Fates favour me, I shall triumph. I know the Indian has not thought to provide himself with provisions. I have enough to last us, with care, for two weeks, and by that time he will starve, for no Federal fool will ever find me here. He dare not leave in search of help, for I should then effect my escape. So we will play our hands, and see if I do not hold the trump card. Ha ! I can baffle any friend you have, Miss Hayward.”

“ White Bird sing,” said the Indian.

“ Yes, I will sing. And as we are now near the main road, some one will be sure to hear me.”

“ Me watch—me wait ! ”

During the entire passage Miss Hayward had not failed to sing her echo-song every few miles, hoping to attract attention and gain assistance. Now that she was so near the public highway, she applied herself anew to the task. Walker made frequent attempts to silence her, but could not do it, as he feared, whenever he turned from his watch, that the Indian would dart in upon him.

Some two years previous, there was a superstitious belief prevailing in that section of Missouri, that the spirit of a murdered lady appeared upon the waters of the Gasconade, singing her mournful lays, and gliding in her death-skiff along the waters. For some time past nothing had been heard of the "lady-ghost;" but when the songs of Miss Hayward were heard, the simple inhabitants began to think that the "ghost-lady" had returned, and instead of seeking to gratify their curiosity, were careful to keep as far as possible away. So it proved with regard to the cave, after the singing commenced.

Several days passed, and no succour appeared. The Indian kept faithful watch, and so did Walker, that he might not be taken by surprise.

Walker, becoming convinced that Fall-leaf had no gun, several times endeavoured to bring his own to bear upon his vigilant foe, but this he could not do without placing himself in a dangerous position. Both were weary for want of sleep, and both would occasionally sink into a fitful slumber; but so intent was each upon his object, that the slightest movement would rouse the sleepers, and each stand ready to meet his foe. But as Fall-leaf had no food he began to grow faint—his firm frame began visibly to weaken; still, he determined to maintain his watch as long as life should last.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE.

LET us return to the army, which we left near Lebanon. The main force was to continue its march onward toward Rolla, while a battalion of infantry, a section of artillery, and a company of cavalry struck to

the west of the main road, and started for the point from which the messenger had arrived. It was a weary march, as the troops already had proceeded twenty miles that day. But the dreadful atrocities related as having been committed by the guerillas fired the hearts of the brave soldiers, and they pressed forward with a will.

The troops at last reached the scene of the outrages, in a place known as "Bohannon Mills Valley." The deeds of blood and horror had not been exaggerated by the messenger. Women had been murdered in their beds, old men were lying stiff and cold, with their brains beaten out, and children, helpless and weeping, were clinging to their dead bodies or wandering distractedly around.

The battalion which had been sent to this valley was the one which Lieutenant Wells and Adjutant Hinton belonged. Wells was still suffering from the terrible anxiety of mind which he had recently undergone, but did not permit his own troubles to interfere with his discharge of duty. The troops camped in the little valley, to collect the scattered families, whose remaining members it was determined to take along with the army in its retreat. Soon word was brought by a mountaineer that the guerillas still were infesting the mountain, while the flames of a burning mill, seen below, seemed to give evidence that the miscreants were still at their work of blood. This decided the officers to scour the mountain, and if possible force the rebels to a fight, for there was not a man in the Union ranks who did not pant for a chance to meet those dastards, who, under the protecting folds of the Confederate flag, committed atrocities at which humanity stood aghast. Wells was soon at the head of a strong party of dismounted dragoons, and with them

struck off for the hills at the back of the burning mill. A weary march was brought to a sudden halt by a deep water gully, over which no perceptible ford offered a passage. Up and down it Wells passed to reconnoiter. It was an ugly spot to be caught in by a wily foe, and the troops were so disposed as to guard against a surprise. The men kept close under cover of the dense undergrowth, so as not to betray their position should the guerillas come upon them. Lieutenant Wells and Adjutant Hinton were proceeding up the watercourse, when a rattle of firearms arrested their attention. It was evident some kind of a conflict was taking place over the stream. The volley was not, however, answered by a return; only a single shot was heard, and then a wild, frenzied shout, as if of maddened men. After a brief interval, another shot was heard, and a second paralyzed howl was followed by shouts and curses, plainly heard by the two anxious senior officers.

"It must be the guerillas after the poor Unionists who have fled to the mountain," said Hinton. "Our men must not be idle when such work is going on. You stay here, Wells, to watch further, while I go back to bring up our boys."

Hinton hurried away, while Wells crept forward to the place where the sounds of conflict were heard. Hardly had he secured a spot for observation, ere he was startled by the crash of the undergrowth and the voices of men not ten rods away. On toward the lieutenant's place of concealment came the pursued and pursuers. The first was but a single man, whom Wells several times detected gliding from tree to tree, keeping "under cover" like an experienced woodsman. He was closely pursued by a band of the guerillas, all dismounted, who were making

the hills echo with their demoniac yells. Slowly the fugitive retired, holding his foes at bay by his sagacious manœuvres. Wells became intensely excited over the scene, and resolved to rush at once to the brave fellow's aid ; but there lay before him the impassable gulf over which few men could bound. Finally the hunted man struck the gully, and saw at a glance that his retreat was cut off. The enemy saw it, too, for they set up a shout of commingled derision and pleasure, which so maddened the fugitive that he yelled :—

“ Laugh away, you darn skunks. I'll make more than one of your dirty carcasses food for the crows before I go under.” And suiting the action to the words, he fired two successive shots from what, apparently, was a double-barrel fowling-piece. Two of the guerillas must have fallen, for ferocious shrieks of agony followed.

Wells could endure no more. There stood before him his brave friend William Nettleton, hunted by a dozen fiends, who must soon overpower him if aid was not quickly given. He started backward for a couple of rods, then rushed with almost flying swiftness up to the gully, and bounded over its sharply-cut edge. For a moment his desperate leap arrested all attention. Nettleton deemed it a new adversary coming upon him from an unexpected quarter, and turned, knife in hand, to close in with his antagonist. What was his astonishment to welcome Lieutenant Wells to his arms ! What a shout followed ! The guerillas quickly sought cover, not knowing how many others might be lurking on the opposite side of the ravine to give them a warm welcome.

“ Wells, by the jumping jingo ! Where did you come from, and where is you going to ? Give us yer hand and lend us yer revolver. Ah, got two of 'em !

Hooray! Down on yer knees quicker'n lightnin', for the woman-murderers are after us, sharp!"

Down the two men fell, just in time to escape a volley from the carbines of a squad of the murderers. With the dexterity of a squirrel, Nettleton rushed forward to a friendly tree, and fired quickly three shots from the revolver. It was a surprise to the enemy, for two of their number fell, so true had the aim been. The squad retreated to reload, but Nettleton had no idea of permitting that, and was about to press his advantage, when a powerfully-built rebel came rushing after him, knife in hand, from the right side of the tree, unseen by the undaunted man until it was too late for the use of his firearm. In a moment they were clasped in the death-struggle. Three or four of the guerillas rushed to the spot, only to be shot down by Wells' deliberate aim. No more appeared, and the two combatants were left to their fearful work. Each had seized the knife hand of the other. Then followed the strain of muscle for the mastery. The guerilla, counting upon his tremendous strength, doubtless hoped for an easy victory; but in that ungainly form he found a bundle of nerves tough as whalebone—a human frame elastic as india-rubber but as invincible as steel.

Down towards the gully the combatants pressed. In vain did the rebel try to force his antagonist to the earth. The supple form of Nettleton bent under his adversary's pressure, but his frame at length rebounded with a force which bore the guerilla to his knees. He drew the Federal down with him, and on their knees the frightful combat continued. Wells would have advanced from his concealment to the rescue, but knew that a rebel carbine would surely bring him down, and thus place it

out of his power to aid his friend at all. Slowly toward the chasm the men worked their way, struggling like two serpents striving for the death-triumph. It was an exciting but appalling spectacle, which the sudden roar of firearms on the left did not serve to arrest. A shout followed, which Wells recognised as that of his own men, who must have discovered a crossing below, and have come upon the band of cut-throats unawares. There was a sudden scattering of those concealed in the immediate vicinity of the hand-to-hand contest, but one villain rushed from his cover upon the writhing forms of the bleeding men, with the design of despatching the unconquered Federal. Wells was upon him like a tiger, and in a moment cut him down with his sword. Hinton beheld the stroke, and came rushing up to the spot just in time to behold the struggling men go over the gully's bank together.

The two officers hurried to the bank. Some twenty feet below they could distinguish the forms of the combatants, both apparently lifeless. Without a moment's hesitancy, Wells dropped from the brink, and fell crashing through the dense jungle lining the water's edge, to the bed of the stream. He was stunned but not injured, and arose to find Nettleton in a sitting posture. Beside him lay the big guerilla, silent in death.

"I'll be danged if that wan't the ugliest cuss as ever I tusseled with, breeches-holt, back-holt, or rough-and-tumble." This was his first ejaculation.

"Are you injured?" anxiously inquired Wells.

"Wal, let's take a reconnaissance. Here's a hole in this arm, that's sp'iled the only good coat I ever had, dang it! Here's a rip, too, in the collar, whar that critter's knife tried to cut my windpipe. He did scratch me thar,

I believe," he said, fingering his neck, down which the blood flowed freely. "By Jemima, ef I haven't lost a finger!" he added, suddenly holding up his hand. "Now, that's too bad, ef it is on the left hand. I rayther think the reb got a mouthful when he chawed that off!" And thus he would have continued for another ten minutes, had not shouts from above aroused him.

"Who's come?" he asked.

"Hinton and the battalion."

"Glory! And have the rebs been caught in a trap?"

"I don't know how many, but from the shots and shouts I don't think many will be permitted to escape."

"All right. Now jist give us a lift, to see if my shanks is all right. There, that's the juniper. Jist look at my back, and see if you find any holes that want plugging."

No "holes" were found, and the good-natured fellow came out of the combat with only flesh-wounds, save the loss of one finger from the left hand, which the guerilla had bitten off. Nettleton was much exhausted, and was finally drawn up out of the gully with no little difficulty, when the men set up a shout which made the hills ring.

"There, boys, that'll pay for the bruises; and now I guess you'll have to do me another favour—jist rub my shanks and the hinges in my back with a little whisky, if you can spare it."

In a moment a dozen pocket-flasks were produced and willing hands gave him a good rubbing, which gave his limbs new strength. It was evident that his muscles had been severely overtaken, for he was languid and incapable of exertion.

Nettleton now narrated the particulars of his and Fall-leaf's adventures. Soon the troops were out on the

search for Captain Hayward, while, assisted by a couple of comrades, the wounded hero of the hour made his way down to the cabin of old Madge. The old creature received him kindly and at once bestirred herself to make him strong again. The air was soon odoriferous with the smell of distilling herbs.

A prolonged shout, ere long, came rolling down the hill. Nettleton was aroused from a sleep into which he had fallen. His two comrades at once hurried out to ascertain its cause. Old Madge paused in her toil and said :—

“The captain’s found, I s’pose.”

“Hooray !” yelled the invalid, now an invalid no longer. Springing from his bed he rushed out, and away he went up the hills in the direction of the still continuing noise. His companions, astonished at his sudden recovery, followed, and all were soon lost to sight.

Harry Hayward was indeed found, and the cavalcade, bearing him on a rude litter, after a half-hour’s time, made its appearance coming down the mountain. Nettleton was at his side, crying like a baby. Wells held the sick man’s hand, while his face, still expressing anxiety, beamed with joy. Hayward was discovered hidden in a quiet, cool nook, where he lay in a very exhausted condition. He had, in his fever-delirium, broken away from Madge’s custody, but no sooner was he out in the cool shade of the trees and rocks than his mind became clear and composed. Weak and ill as he was, he still had strength to seek a place of safety from pursuit, should it be attempted, as he supposed it would be. At nightfall he had determined to seek out some respectable-looking farmhouse, and on the morrow to cast himself upon the mercy of strangers, knowing that even though that

stranger might be a foe, he could not be more inhuman than men wearing the uniform of Confederate officers. But the sufferer was spared further efforts. The shouts and reports of firearms Hayward distinctly heard, and at once surmised that a Union force was at hand. When the men scattered in squads for the search through the mountain, the captain beheld one of the parties passing before his hiding-place. It was his moment of deliverance. He stepped out before the astonished soldiers, who, not recognizing the apparition, did not at once welcome him.

"My men, don't you know me?"

"Captain Hayward!" they shouted, as they rushed upon him, and clasped him in their arms.

He was borne toward Madge's cabin, to be welcomed on the way by the gathering men. Wells now appeared. The joy of that meeting can be surmised. The welkin was made to ring with the glad notes of the jubilant soldiers. These notes it was which aroused the sleeper in the cabin, and when at length he appeared, struggling wearily up the hill, the cavalcade paused to permit the overjoyed parties a few minutes of undisturbed greeting. Nettleton was not even talkative—a circumstance indicative of the depth of his feelings—and it was not until the captain was fully domiciled in the cabin, that he could consent to talk of the past and its painful incidents. He then narrated the events of Walker's plot, as we have here recorded them, ending with the tragedy of the mill.

It was a revelation of intense but most painful interest to the sick man ; but he bore the affliction of his sister's loss with great resolution, sustained by the conviction that He who doeth all things well would not permit the evil one to triumph.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAVE AND THE CONTEST FOR LIFE.

AFTER two days spent in the cabin, Nettleton became excessively uneasy. From something which had transpired, he conceived that old Madge knew more of Walker's whereabouts than she had yet confessed. This conviction, once formed, was but the prelude to action. Without informing any one of his purpose, he followed the old woman into the woods—whither she went in pursuit of her medicaments—having in his hands a stout rope. In a wild, retired spot, he confronted her.

"Look here, old critter, you're close-mouthed, when it would be better for your health to talk a little. Now, you jist tell me where Captain Walker has taken Miss Mamie. Talk straight, and not a gap in the fence."

"I don't know where he has gone," she answered, rather evasively.

"That is, you are a nat'ral-born Know-nothing. Well, it will assist your memory, perhaps, to stretch your neck a little, jist to take the kinks out, you know; so pass your shock of tow into this 'ere noose, while I pull you up on that limb." And suiting the action to the word he flung the noose dexterously over her head. She was taken by surprise, and trembling in every limb, asked:—

"Would you hang me?"

"Sartain as there's a tree and here's a rope."

"I don't know where Walker is, but I think he has a place of refuge down the river, near the Ghost Swamp. There is a cave in the river's bank, opposite to the swamp, where I know his confederates occasionally secrete themselves. He may have gone there; but, as he has been gone over two days, I don't see why he should be there

now. It is my opinion, however, that Miss Mamie, as you call her, is there, as it is the best place to keep her."

"Ah, thank you, old Mrs. Crow's-foot! There is something more on your mind, isn't there?"

Madge looked at him inquiringly.

"I know all about your friend's visit; so do you jist play your cards right, or I'll catch ye nigger."

This allusion to her "friend" startled the old woman.

"He was no friend of mine; he came only on his own account, and I only gave him bread, as I give anyone who is hungry."

"All right; only what did he tell you?"

She hesitated. Nettleton gave the rope a twitch, and looked up at the limb. The hint was enough.

"The man said he was up from below on a scout. He was anxious to know what I knew about the voice of a woman which he said had been heard all along the river. He heard it distinctly as he passed the road along the river by the Ghost Swamp; others had heard it, and he believed that I could tell him as to its meaning. I told him it was a sign that he was singled out for death—that every person who heard it was called, and he might, therefore, make up his mind that his time was come. With that he left. I did not inform him of who was in my cabin, nor anything about what had happened here. So I hope you will let me go, and frighten me no more."

Nettleton slowly lifted the noose from her neck, and, without another word, walked back to the cabin. He called out Lieutenant Wells, who was then watching at the captain's bedside, and the two friends held a long consultation together, which ended by an order for a guard of twenty to be ready for a night expedition.

By ten o'clock all were in readiness and on their way, taking the river path down stream. Wells was in command. Nettleton acted as scout and guide. All night long they pressed on, and daylight found them on the hills opposite the spot indicated by Madge as the locality of the cave in the bank. Asking Wells for his field-glass, Nettleton carefully scrutinized the river's bank opposite. After a short survey he suddenly exclaimed :—

"The Ingen, as sure as Sacramento !"

"What do you say ?" inquired Wells.

"Fall-leaf—see him—there he lays, and there is the cave. I'm blest if I know what to make of it. I supposed, of course, that that red-skin was roasted alive in the mill ; but there he is, and here I goes."

So saying, down he dashed into the river, and forded its waters rapidly. Once on the opposite side, he hurried up the bank, and soon reached the ledge across which the Indian was lying. The poor fellow was but half conscious from over-fatigue and hunger, yet his eyes were fixed with cat-like vigilance upon the aperture of the cave, while his hand still firmly clasped the knife upon which he relied to do his deadly work.

Nettleton approached him silently, and touched his feet. At once the Indian looked behind him.

"Give Fall-leaf drink—quick !" was his hurried whisper, while the finger on his lip indicated silence.

Nettleton comprehended all at a glance. Passing his canteen and knapsack to Fall-leaf, he beheld the Indian drink and eat with satisfaction. Not a word passed between them.

"Good ! Fall-leaf much weak ; now strong again," he whispered.

"Where's Miss Mamie ?"

The Indian pointed to the cavern.

"Walker, too?"

Fall-leaf nodded, and scowled so fiercely that Nettleton perceived the savage wanted no interference in his case.

"Shan't I do the job for ye?"

"No—Fall-leaf mad. Me kill 'em—you go away."

"That's the talk, Ingen. You shall have your man ; but, Jerusalem, don't I ache to git my paws on him !"

A noise was now heard in the cave ; it was Walker's voice. "I'll not permit you to sing, I again tell you. If those men crossing the river are Union soldiers, you shall not betray our whereabouts, and if Fall-leaf moves I'll shoot him !"

"Bah, you ornery cuss ; I'm on your track now !" shouted Nettleton.

"William—dear William !" cried the captive woman, recognising his voice.

"Here !" he responded, "and so chock full of the devil that if I don't get rid of it soon it will split me. Walker, you—dirty beast, dare you fight me ?" he yelled.

"I dare fight any decent antagonist, but don't care to dirty my hands with you," was the reply.

"Oh, you nasty, miserable, thievin' woman-stealer, man-assassinator. I'll cook your breakfast for you, but Fall-leaf shall eat it ; he'll dirty his hands with you !"

"I defy you and all your crew," growled the rebel. "If one of you dares to show your head, you are a dead man !"

"Dang yer picter, here's a head—shoot it !" cried Nettleton, sticking his head out in a manner to dare Walker's fire.

The scoundrel was prepared, and discharged his gun in an instant. Its report had not ceased its echo ere Fall-

leaf, with a bound like a panther, dropped before the entrance of the hole. Walker stood there with knife in hand, to foil any such attempt to storm his castle. A quick blow with his foot sent the Indian headlong over the ledge.

"Try that on me," roared Nettleton, who, uninjured by the ball from Walker's musket, was at the Indian's heels.

No sooner said than done, and Nettleton received an unexpected blow in the stomach from the rebel's heavy boot which sent him almost instantly over the ledge after Fall-leaf.

That was the propitious moment for escape. Without a word to his captive, he passed out upon the ledge, and had nearly reached its terminus when Lieutenant Wells, followed by his men, confronted the desperate man. Drawing a revolver, Wells cried :—

"Surrender, or you are a dead man !"

"I never will surrender to you," was the fierce reply, as the now cornered desperado began slowly to retire backward, to regain his stronghold.

He had retreated fully half way to the entrance, when his heel caught in the rough floor of the ledge, and his balance was lost. For a moment he sought to regain his foothold, but finding it gone, he gave a shout and leaped over the precipice.

The soldiers looked over the ledge, and saw his form disappear in the trees beneath. Wells did not wait, but rushed to the cavern mouth.

"Miss Mamie."

A form darkened the passage, and within stood Miss Hayward, smiling and blushing as if just caught at her toilet.

With a cry of joy Wells entered and clasped her to his bosom.

"Safe and uninjured! Thank God—thank God!" answered the maiden.

"Safe and restored; and, thank God, your brother, too, is recovered, and is now in our hands, doing well!"

"Then I am happy, indeed!" she could only reply, while tears of joy checked further utterance.

Wells had entirely forgotten Walker, in his moment of sweet communion with his restored friend. But a shout which came up from the depths below recalled him to duty. It was a wild Indian war-whoop; then a succession of ejaculations which the men could plainly distinguish.

"Go in, Ingen!" "Walk along, Walker, you darn skunk you!" "There, that's a good un, Ingen!" "Now another in the corn-crib!" "There he goes!" "Hooray for the Ingen!"

All well knew the meaning of this, and a number of the men hastened to the base of the cliff, by a long round-about path, which came up from the river to find Walker slain, and Fall-leaf badly cut in the face, arms, and shoulders, but no serious wounds on the body. Nettleton stood over his friend, bathing his wounds in the clear waters of the river.

"Ingen's done for the cut-throat, sure. It was mean to shut me out; but it was his game, 'cause he treed it. I'd give all I'll ever be worth—"

"Would you give Sally?" put in one of the men.

"Dang Sally—no, dang my skin—that is, dang me if I wouldn't give my commission, boys,—that's it! give my commission,—to have had the satisfaction of doin' Fall-leaf's work." Nettleton looked savagely at the body

of the dead man, seeming to feel that he had made a personal sacrifice in permitting the Indian to kill his enemy.

It would appear that both Fall-leaf and Nettleton, when kicked off the ledge, fell at its foot without injury, as the base was banked up to a considerable distance with the decayed and water-soaked *débris* of the bank, down which they rolled into the water. They had recovered, and stepped out into the stream to look up to the ledge, when they beheld Wells and Walker confronted. In a moment the rebel staggered, and went bounding off the ledge, and, like his two antagonists, came tumbling and sliding down the declivity, landing at the water's brink upon his feet. There he was received by the Indian with the wild whoop which startled those above. Nettleton, in honour bound not to interfere, stood by while the two fierce foes closed in deadly conflict. Walker, though a resolute and strong man, was not equal in a knife fight to the supple savage. After a few passes, Fall-leaf buried his knife in the rebel's bosom. Thus closed the career of a bad man—bad by nature, but rendered doubly bad by the cause which he espoused. To serve that cause he had to betray his country, desert his friends, stifle the voice of conscience, perjure his honour, become a hypocrite and a deceiver: after that, all other degrees of crime, however monstrous, were easy.

Wells followed the men at length, and appeared on the spot. He was shocked at the sight before him, but conceded its justice. His own wish was to have secured Walker for trial and punishment according to military law; yet it must be acknowledged that, many times, he felt like wreaking condign personal vengeance on the

head of the man who had wrought so successfully in crime. He ordered the body to be buried in the *débris* at the foot of the cliff; and there it reposes to-day, with no monument save the cave above, which will long remain as a witness to the traitor's crime and the traitor's doom.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BODY-GUARD'S SICKNESS AND CURE.

SLOWLY the party wended its way back to the mill. Just at nightfall it came in sight of the lowly hut which covered the treasure so dear to the heart of the rescued maiden. How her eager arms longed to clasp her brother's form to her bosom—how her ears longed for the sound of his voice! The wings of the swallow would have been slow for her pining soul; but the moment of reunion came at last—the dead was made alive, the lost restored. Miss Hayward, gallanted by Wells, pressed on ahead of the troop, and their panting steeds at length stood riderless before the cabin-door, for the riders had disappeared within.

The meeting of brother and sister was one of mingled pleasure and pain. Both had suffered so much that to think of it was pain. Captain Hayward was greatly emaciated. Loss of blood, fever, hunger, and exposure would have ended a life less tenacious than his; but despite his suffering, the presence of friends, the rescue of his sister, the anticipated happiness of her union with the man who had proven himself so well worthy of her—all conspired to give an elasticity to his spirits more potent than the infusions of herbs prepared by the not unskilled hands of old Madge, who, from an enemy, had, "by the

force of couldn't help herself," as Nettleton declared, become a useful instrument at a critical moment.

And what about Nettleton? All day long, after the morning's experience at the cave, he had plodded on soberly, somewhat absorbed in his own reflections. Behind him sat Fall-leaf, who, from his weak state, was well content to ride. The Indian, though perfectly silent and apparently indifferent to all things, now that his work was done, still was inwardly pleased at the rescue and the thought of the pleasure in store for the captain, of whose safety he had been informed by Nettleton; and he was quite willing to go into camp for a few days before putting out again on his endless scouts.

"Nettle be sick?" he at length asked of his companion.

"Not by a darn sight, Ingen!"

"Nettle be sick—Fall-leaf knows it!"

"You be danged to darnation, you red onion-head of a Delaware!" was the somewhat excited answer, as he turned in the saddle and stared the Indian in the face.

Fall-leaf smiled. "Nettle want physic—Miss Long give Nettle physic," he obstinately persisted.

"Now look here, Mr. Ingen, ef you wants to fight, jest you say so, and I'll be catawampussed ef I don't lick you wuss'n a nigger what's got a mad woman arter him!"

"Fall-leaf no want to fight Nettle. Maybe whip Nettle—den what Miss Long say?"

"Yoh—yoh! you mean, sneakin' son of a brick-kiln! Ef you don't stop that clapper in your head, I'll be switched ef I don't put a peg through it!" And he set his face firmly to the front, rowelled the horse severely with his spurs, and dashed a-head at a speed quite uncomfortable to the provoking Delaware.

When the cavalcade reached the cabin, Nettleton did not obtrude himself upon the party within. For an hour or more they were alone. At length Hayward asked : "Where is my brave preserver? Why is he not here to enjoy our happiness? And Fall-leaf, too; I would thank him as he deserves, the noble savage."

Search was made. Fall-leaf was found out by the camp-fire, undergoing the process of the lotion-cure for his wounds at the hands of Madge, who was carefully washing the bruised and cut flesh of the red man. All inquiries for Nettleton were fruitless; he was not to be found. It was ascertained, at length, that his horse also was gone. Many were the surmises as to the cause of his absence, and fears were expressed for his safety.

Morning came, and the party, now rejoined by the entire battalion, prepared to move, by easy stages, from the valley toward the line of march pursued by the retreating army. Captain Hayward was made quite comfortable in a camp-waggon, with his sister for companion and nurse. Fall-leaf pushed out far ahead to scout and secure the command from surprise. Adjutant Hinton and Wells were tireless in their devotion to the comfort and safety of their charge. It was a pleasant journey—that week of slow progress toward Tipton. At length, however, the village hove in sight. The white tents dotting the hills and valleys proved that the division was there. While yet a long way off, a party of horsemen, accompanied by ladies, was seen dashing off at full speed toward the spot where the battalion had halted for its noon bivouac. Wells caught sight of the party, and with his glass made out the gaunt form of Nettleton far in advance. Behind him on the same horse rode a female, whose identity the officer could not fix. Nearer and

nearer the horsemen came, until, after an exciting race, they dashed into the camp—Nettleton and Sally Long! They were received with a wild huzza from the entire troop, and none shouted louder than Nettleton himself.

"Hooray! hooray! By the eternal jingo!" he cried, leaping from the horse, and leaving Miss Sally sitting there alone, before the eyes of the joyous and excited troops. Making his way to the captain's "marquee"—as the men had named the waggon—he was welcomed by Hayward in a manner which quickly turned his servant's joy to mourning, for the embrace of real affection bestowed quite upset Nettleton's confidence.

"I'm nothin' but a great darn skunk, anyhow!" he exclaimed, as, breaking away from the captain's embrace, he started for his horse and the neglected Sally.

"Nettle be sick!"

He turned to behold Fall-leaf gazing upon him in mock compassion.

"Not by a danged sight, you infernal lump of glory!" he now shouted, as, clasping the Indian in his arms, he gave the red man a hug which brought forth a grunt.

"Ugh! Nettle make Fall-leaf sick! Guess Nettle got full of Miss Sally now!"

"Yes, sar; and thar she is, in all her glory!" was the rejoinder, as the "body-guard" pointed, in evident pride, to the smiling woman.

"Gentlemen of the jury! let me present to you my wife—the dangdest sk—no, the most blissful woman you ever saw."

"Your wife!" exclaimed a dozen voices at once.

"Yes, my wife! Hitched to me tighter'n a handle to the jug, by Chaplain Disbrow, two days ago, by the eternal jingo!"

This was enough for the men. All order gave way before the hilarious uproar which followed. They pressed around Sally to offer their congratulations, which the delighted wife received with great good nature and dignity, still sitting where she had been left—behind the saddle, on the horse.

At this moment the party first descried rode up. It was composed of Mrs. Hinton, Miss Morton, and a number of friends eager to welcome the captain and his sister, of whose fortunes Nettleton had, most unexpectedly, three days before, brought the news to camp. That it was a joyous meeting may well be assumed.

Does not our story here end? To say that Miss Mamie Hayward soon became Mrs. Wells, in the presence of the whole division—that a grand gala-day followed—is but half the truth, however; for, at the same time, another bridegroom was there in the form of the pale but happy Captain Henry Hayward, who took to be his comforter and much-needed nurse the woman who loved him most truly—Miss Nettie Morton. It was, indeed, a most happy consummation of a drama which promised, at one time, to end only in sorrow and broken hearts.

Not the least happy of all that throng, nor the least noted, was

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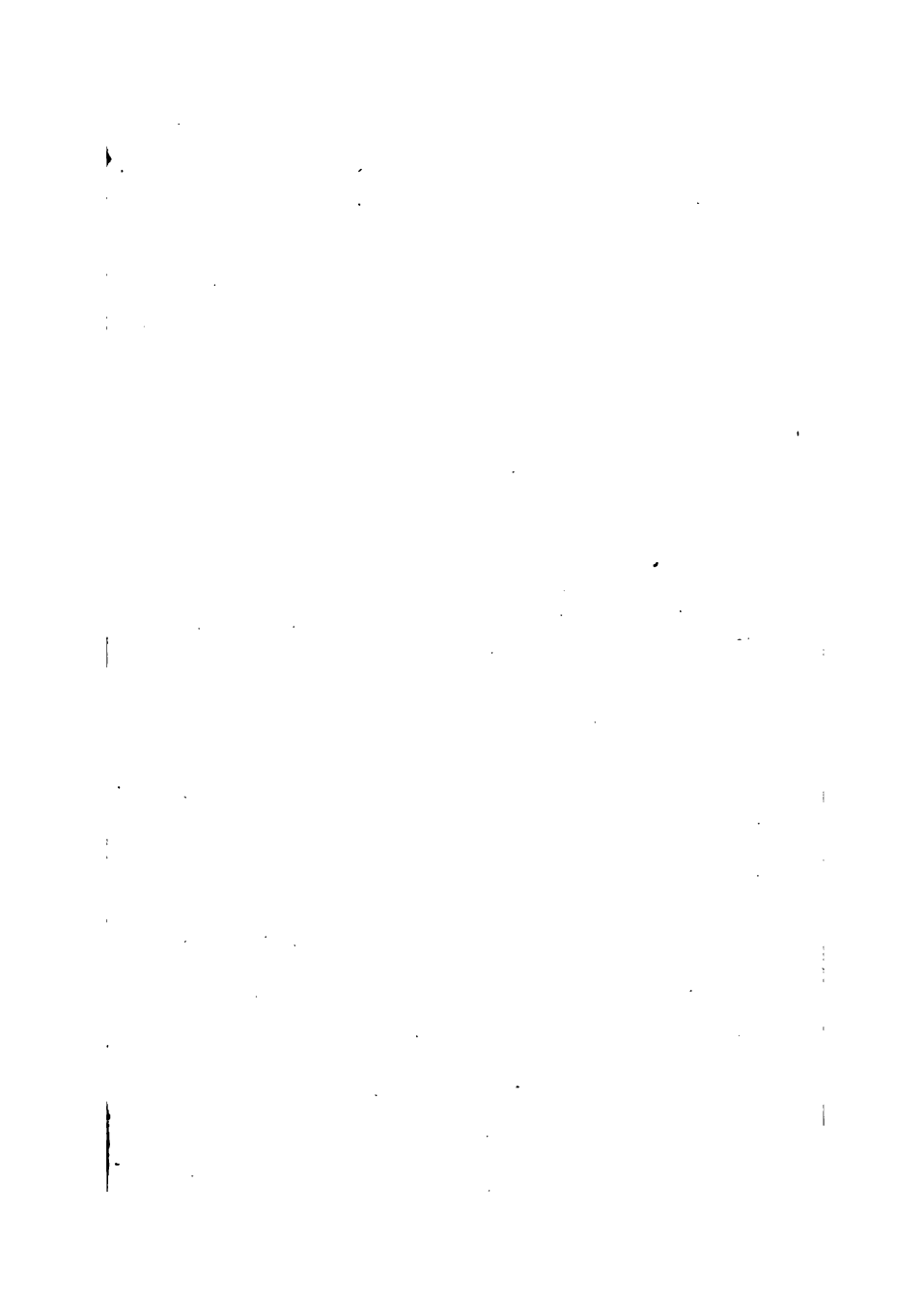
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BLACK HOLLOW;

OR,

THE DRAGOON'S BRIDE.

A TALE OF THE RAMAPO IN 1779.

By N. C. IRON,

AUTHOR OF "TWO GUARDS," "GODBOLD THE SPY," ETC., ETC.

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BLACK HOLLOW.

CHAPTER I.

NIGHT IN THE GORGE.

DEEP in a valley formed by the lofty mountains of Orange County, west of the Highlands of the Hudson—which, from its dreary loneliness, at the distant period of which we write, was a suitable retreat for the rapacious animals of the forest—was the solitary cabin of Elsie Turner, a woman of tall figure and powerful frame. Although aged and grey, her penetrating eye showed that the mind, of which this radiance was the index, was by no means in the wane. Few asked why she lived in this abandoned glen, and yet fewer attempted to approach it. It had been her haunt beyond the memory of the oldest resident of the district, and tradition had instructed them that, folded in the dark shadow of those frowning mountains, abode one whom their superstitious fathers had called the “Witch of Black Hollow.” But, whether as a species of refinement upon the rudeness of the age from which this tradition emanated, or the better to propitiate the mystic Elsie, she was no longer called the witch, though the glen was often referred to as Black Hollow.

It was whispered that the space encompassed by the mountains—for there was no other evidence of this fact—was shaped like a bowl, and that the dread Elsie used it as her magic cauldron, when tapping the reservoirs of the

surrounding hills, and closing with her gates the narrow gorge which was the only entrance to this dell, she filled the interval with water, and, having a furnace in the bowels of the earth, she pursued her incantations in this mighty crucible! There it was said that she inflicted her punishments also, and the unearthly cries which were at times heard to proceed from this locality were attributed by the ignorant *habitans* of that wild section to the delinquent demons who struggled in this monstrous boiling kettle, and the only reply of Elsie to these fiendish sorcs was to add the fuel of her appalling smile to the raging flames.

The woman, however, was not wholly alone in her gloomy domain. She had a page, whom she called Goblin, who was as puny as his patroness was gigantic. His legs were merely rudimental out-shoots from his body, which was disproportionately elongated, and his head was large, with facial features by no means prepossessing. He was, notwithstanding, active, adroit, and incorruptibly faithful. He was well known in the district, and though he often called at the several houses on errands from his mistress, he never, either by word or gesture, encountered ridicule. He, too, commanded some respect by his stern habits.

The gorge which formed the only entrance to this hidden valley was narrow, dark, and lengthy. It was a mere water-course, paved with the unhewn rock of nature, amidst the sinuosities of which meandered a stream, reduced sometimes to a thread, while at other periods it would be swollen to a foaming torrent. Even this apparent caprice in the flow of waters was attributed to the agency of Elsie, and was thought to disclose the ire or placidity of her moods—for none of those by whom

the locality was then peopled thought of ascribing the changes to their simple, natural causes, when there was a power within the valley which was solemnly believed to be able to control the very moods of nature. Thus the gorge was suddenly left alone in its isolation, and, as no travelled road approached within several miles, very few persons ever knew the whereabouts of the entrance to dread Elsie's glen.

So wild a region offered a tempting haunt to the free-booter and the fugitive from justice, and when the war of American Independence broke out, it soon became the seat of interesting action, lying, as the Ramapo Valley did, on the direct route from Trenton and Dobb's Ferry—a route well beaten by patriotic feet, in the campaigns which followed. The mountains around became infested with the "Cowboys" and refugee scoundrels, who lived by preying upon farmers, travellers, and stragglers from the army—all of whom were plundered without mercy. After a while, these rogues grew so strong as to assume a bolder front. They organized into a "brotherhood," established laws and oaths, chose a leader who possessed arbitrary power, and, by the date of our story, as the "Bandits of the Ramapo," had become a terror to the region round about. To hunt these villains, who were in league with the enemy, a strong force of Continental cavalry and infantry was detached to the valley, and there remained during the summer of 1779.

Things were in this state, when a lady, mounted upon a well-bred horse, might have been seen proceeding down an old but long-avoided road. It was plain that the horse-woman was absorbed in other thoughts than the pleasures of a ride, for she pressed recklessly and eagerly onward, while in her face could be read passion and

if this hovel was not guarded by sufficient horrors, a skeleton hand was suspended upon the door, which completely shielded the latch ! Trembling with apprehension, yet with a will unshaken by these frightful incidents, the lady struck the door with her riding whip. There was no response to the blow, and she impatiently repeated the summons. Then a querulous voice exclaimed from within :—

“Come in, Amy Ward, thou misguided child.”

Amy started at this recognition before she had been seen.

“She knows me, and possibly by the same secret agency she may have learned the secret that I have so carefully sheltered in my heart. Well,” she thought, “it may release me from a painful recital. She is a fearful woman,” and, as if forgetful of the command to enter, again struck the door.

“Come in, I say,” replied Elsie, sharply, “for if thou strikest that door again it shall fall forward and crush thy dainty bones beneath its weight.”

“Come in !” repeated Amy, as she gazed upon the hand. “Elsie, good Elsie, I have no power to open the door. There is a hand already on the latch.”

“Then that hand shall be thy usher,” replied Elsie ; and the next moment the skeleton fingers moved. They pressed down the latch, the door opened, and the entrance to Elsie’s studio was unclosed !

When she had somewhat recovered from her astonishment, Amy entered, to find the old woman standing erect in the centre of the room, folded in a scarlet wrapper, with a turban upon her head of the same radiant colour. The apartment was not large, but the walls were furnished with innumerable niches, from which protruded the heads

of venomous animals, birds, and reptiles, such as the wolf, the bear, the eagle, the rattlesnake, &c., in all the ferocity of their nature, which supplied the impression that their bodies were behind, and caused Amy to retreat toward the door until she discovered the ingenious cheat.

"Elsie," she said, at length, "I come to ask assistance—to implore that you will employ a portion of the power which it is said you possess, to my advantage. May I reckon on your help?"

The old creature looked sternly at the maid, but uttered not a word.

"Speak, Elsie," continued Amy, with increasing agitation. "Be merciful to one whose nerves have been already too severely tested by the terrors of this day."

"I've no word of welcome to ye, Amy Ward," exclaimed Elsie; "but I've dealt you mercy, or I should have struck you to the earth as you entered the way which ha' bin trod by no ordinary foot since here I've lived."

"Elsie," said Amy, "I would not have ventured to this frightful labyrinth, but from dire necessity. I want your support, your power, and even your enchantments, if such you possess; and there are no terms within my reach that I will refuse, if you aid me. I implore you to use your power to mitigate my sorrows, or, if you refuse, then do the next act of mercy, and commit me to eternity. I am ready to do anything rash, evil, wrong. Oh, save me from it!"

Elsie's hard features visibly relaxed.

"Thou hast been rash to venture here, Amy Ward," said she, with calmness. "I'll listen to thy griefs, and perhaps I may find an ointment for thy woes. What wouldst thou have, child?"

"I would ask your aid, good mother," replied Amy, while a blush suffused her face; "I would ask you to influence the heart of another in my favour—one whose heart is free, but who is too absorbed in devotion to his country to love me as I crave."

"Ah," interposed Elsie, "it were better for thee, I think, that I should practice my powers upon thyself, rather than upon the one thou covetest. Thou needest to be disenchanted."

"Worthy advice of a mother to her child," replied Amy, with something of resentment in her tone; "but you and I do not occupy that relation to each other. If I required counsel I should not have sought Black Hollow as my temple, nor Elsie Turner as my monitress. I want aid—can you give it?"

She spoke with a firmness of tone and a flash of the eye which proved how great was the passion which mastered her.

"Who is he whose soul thou wouldst so mercifully recommend to my enchantments?"

"If you know what passes in my heart, surely you can read its secrets? I love the gallant Captain of a hundred horse, whose encampment is not far distant."

"Young Randolph Murray?" said the old woman, in evident surprise. "Amy Ward, he is no mate for thee. Though fierce and bloody in the saddle, the instant he has sheathed his sword and washed his reeking hands of the day's carnage, he is calm and gentle as a lamb, and he then seeks that comfort and repose that your fiery nature never could afford him."

"Thou knowest me not, Elsie," exclaimed the excited maid. "I would sacrifice every taste, every ambition, every feeling to win Randolph Murray's love. I have

his regard, but I must have his love—his whole heart. I will have it!" She looked queenly in her fury.

"Randolph is more sagacious than thou, foolish maiden; and he uses his wisdom as well in matters of the heart as in those of battle. No, no, he has cast his eyes another way, and his regard only is for thee. Be content with that; it is all thou canst have, for, even now, his back is turned against thee."

"Do you speak from your own knowledge?" demanded Amy.

"From my own knowledge," deliberately responded Elsie.

"That Randolph Murray turns his back on me?" continued Amy.

"Ay," said Elsie, firmly.

"And with his face toward one whom he regards with more favour than myself?" asked Amy, with a degree of trepidation that betrayed a tremor in every limb.

"It is even so," replied Elsie, with solemnity.

"I cannot think it. I cannot believe it, Elsie," exclaimed Amy, after a pause of evident agony. "I know you are in error. Randolph Murray may be, at this moment, indifferent to me; but he does not prefer another. There is nothing so fatal as that between us."

"Yes, as I am able to read human hearts and the future, I tell thee it is so; he loves another, and thou art not of his soul's choice. I can tell thee no more." Elsie spoke with feeling, but with great earnestness.

"False, false! It cannot be true. I must have him—I will have him for mine alone. I quit thy roof with my heart on fire—my soul wild and dark as this terrible night," and opening the door she rushed from the cabin towards the gorge.

"Come back, come back!" exclaimed Elsie, in undisguised terror. "The gates of the gorge are closed—thou canst not quit!" but her voice was unheard, and the impetuous girl plunged onward.

"Goblin!" exclaimed Elsie, as she re-entered the room, "Goblin! Here! Quick!"

The dwarf answered the summons at once.

"Follow her. The waters are rushing down the gorge in such fury that she cannot proceed beyond the path. But she is wild, and may not heed even the waters. Quick, I say! Guide her back here!"

Even as she spoke, Goblin was lost in the darkness.

The distracted girl, on quitting the cabin, rushed along the path which conducted to the gorge. She reached the margin of the outlet—hurried into the chasm, and, upon descending, found herself plunged into a foaming stream of water. She uttered a piercing cry, which rung out upon the night wild and clear above the rushing of the waters. It was quickly answered from the bank, for Goblin was at hand:—

"Cling to the rocks, and I'll come to you."

The terrified girl heard and comprehended the shout from above; but though life had suddenly become sweet because death seemed so near, the relentless waters bore her from the promised aid. With the savage torrents hissing in her ears, she was borne down the gloomy vale of death. All the despair of the moment gave way to the one great hope of life.

"Cling to the rocks, and I'll be with you!" The words sounded like a clarion, but they seemed to die away in the distance like an echo, and she passed from consciousness as the last faint hope died away.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONQUERER CONQUERED.

THERE were not two more devoted friends in the Revolutionary army than Randolph Murray and Alfred Horton. The former, a Captain of horse, had participated in so many bold adventures, that his presence afforded a feeling of security to every district where he was encamped. His men, too, had such reverence for their youthful leader, that they fought almost as much for his honour and approval as for the great cause of independence. Nor was Alfred Horton less bold. His name was associated with much honourable service in the field. He was Captain of a company of infantry, between which and the fearless dragoons of Randolph Murray was maintained a species of Freemasonry brotherhood, in consequence of the romantic incident by which their leaders had become such faithful friends.

The introduction of Randolph to Alfred took place upon the battle-field, amid the dead and dying. Alfred and his company had been surrounded by the enemy ; they fought gallantly, but were fearfully outnumbered, and no succour seemed at hand, when the eye of Randolph perceived their desperate condition. He knew the metal of his troopers, though few in number, and gave the word to charge. They dashed forward like a whirlwind, bearing a thunderbolt at its head, which was Randolph ; and, though those who beheld the seemingly rash attempt thought that he was riding to destruction, he quickly demonstrated that he better knew the path to victory, for he broke through the opposing ranks, rescued his brother soldiers, and then retired in safety, despite every effort of the foe. The next morning, at an early hour, Alfred :

sion of aristocracy, it will be a 'surprise party,' without preliminary courtesies or invitation. Our host is a gentleman named Woodfall, a wealthy resident of these parts, who is devoted to our cause, although too old to fight. The male portion of the conclave will, I imagine, be 'of the war;' the female department will be furnished by the district; the belle of the party will be the daughter of the host, the fair Pauline Woodfall. Ah, she is beautiful to behold! Beautiful as a poet's creation, only that, with faultless figure and graceful carriage, she possesses a mind not less attractive. So beware, my gallant Captain, or you will be overcome by a woman, much as you may dislike to be vanquished in a fair field."

"Why do you entice me into such perilous society?" said Randolph, with a hearty laugh at his friend's rhapsody and prophecy.

"Because," replied Alfred, "I wish you well. I have seen you escape great dangers unscathed, and you may escape now. Courage and prudence, my friend, are your virtues. But, let our horses be saddled at once, that we may be early on the road, not to seem lacking in courtesy to our host."

The horses were soon announced as in readiness, and the friends were quickly in the saddle. Passing beyond the tents, they proceeded toward Mr. Woodfall's. When they reached the residence of that gentleman, they found but few visitors had preceded them, which gave the young men opportunity for a more pleasing introduction to the host and his daughter. Randolph was filled with surprise at Pauline, confessing to himself that his friend's estimate of her loveliness was by no means extravagant. But added to her charms of person was an attractive witchery.

of manner, that was rendered more irresistible from her simplicity and absence of design, and Randolph had but little doubt that there were many victims to her wiles, who never had given language to the tortures of their hearts. . . . It was the custom of wealthy parents before the war to educate their children in England, and Pauline had been there for that purpose, and Randolph found her truly accomplished. Before the visitors began to arrive in any numbers, the officer and the fair hostess had established quite an intimacy.

But the continuous influx of her guests forced Pauline from Randolph's presence to bid them welcome. He watched every movement of her graceful form, and caught each silvery accent of her voice. After a time dancing was proposed, and one of the gentlemen set the example of selecting partners by soliciting of Pauline the honour of her hand. Accepting his proffered arm, they proceeded to the lawn where the violin was waiting. They were followed by many others, until Randolph found himself alone. He, too, quitted the room, but only to move a few steps and observe the dancers, or, rather, the only one who had interest in his eye. The dance had ended and been resumed several times, and once, during the ceremony of exchange of partners, Pauline furtively cast a glance to where Randolph stood ; but the next instant she engaged herself for the ensuing cotillion. After a time, she quitted the lawn for the house. Randolph, at her approach, met her, and by his conversation insensibly led her away through the garden walks. Side by side they walked, so deeply engrossed with each other as to be unconscious of all else save their own happiness. They had reached a secluded part of the grounds, when Pauline, perceiving the distance to which they had strolled, sup-

denly paused in confusion, and remarked, with much tact, as if she had really acted as his *cicerone*:—

“The grounds extend to yonder highlands beyond the dell; but I am already too far distant from my guests, and shall be charged with inattention.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Randolph, with a sigh, “society has privileges that must not be superseded for a poor claimant like myself; but I could with less reluctance sacrifice a portion of my life, than lose your association at the present moment among these quiet shades.”

There was nothing in these words beyond the not unusual flattery of a “gallant” of that period, but the manner in which they were uttered, the sincerity of the speaker, and the susceptible and truthful nature of Pauline, combined in producing a visible effect upon the lady, whose pale face and trembling figure at once attracted the observation of Randolph. He was pained and glad, but did not forget what was due to a lady in agitation, and implored her to accept the assistance of his support, and to permit him to signal for assistance. Pauline placed her arm in that of Randolph, and they proceeded slowly to retrace their steps.

No further conversation ensued. Both seemed thoughtful. Randolph confined himself to inquiries of a common-place nature. This desultory conversation gave her time to compose her nerves, and before they reached the house, Pauline was quite restored. She at once passed within the rooms, and although she did nothing to avoid the society of Randolph, it was observed that the remainder of their intercourse occurred when grouped with others.

When Captain Horton reminded Randolph that the hour for departure had arrived, a circumstance that might

not otherwise have occurred to his own mind, he felt some unwillingness to change his quarters ; but, like a true soldier at roll-call, responded and prepared at once to leave. In bidding adieu to Pauline, a little confusion was discernible in both parties ; but the generous and hospitable father was so pleased with Captain Murray, that he would not resign his hand until he had extracted from him a promise that he would repeat his visit at as early a day as his duties would permit.

The friends mounted their horses and quitted the house, and though Alfred Horton had been so voluble in the morning in reference to their lively hostess, that astute critic, from some subtle reason, abstained from all allusion to her on his return. Miss Woodfall, the peerless beauty of the assembled fair, was only thought of—not made the theme of remark.

Significant silence !

Pauline availed herself of the earliest opportunity to retire when her friends had left the house, and in the silence of her room let her thoughts revert to the day's experience. Of Captain Murray she had heard as a brave but somewhat reckless leader of fearless troopers, well fitted to use the sword and command those stubborn spirits with whom he had performed much gallant service ; but when she saw in him the handsome soldier and accomplished man, whose calling could not be detected from any word of his conversation, who never referred to war or to the achievements of his brave men, she confessed both her surprise and her admiration.

Poor Pauline !

CHAPTER III.

THE RESCUE AT THE GORGE.

THE morning after Randolph's return from the ~~see~~, his attendant and body-servant, Batman, was somewhat astonished at the indisposition of the proverbially restless Captain to rise from his pillow. He was commonly the first person moving in the camp, and thus by example as well as by his precept he exhibited his love of diligence. But this morning he had dismissed his wiser maxims and was indulging in dreams. Again was he strolling through those fragrant gardens with Pauline, guiding her footsteps. Again he recalled her words, her acts, her looks ; he was in an Elysium known only to those touched with the divinity of love. The practical Batman, however, ventured to disturb this reverie and to hint to Randolph how the morning was progressing. The dream folded its wings slowly, and duty again stood in its stead. One moment to Pauline but a whole day to his country. His breakfast disposed of, he immediately ordered out the horses, which he examined with close scrutiny, together with the accoutrements of the men, who now anticipated some instant service, for it was his wont, previous to every expedition, to personally inform himself of each inefficient man and unfit horse, that he might not be encumbered in his movements by the tardiness of either. Yet Randolph had no design of engaging in any immediate enterprise ; the newly-stirred feelings within his breast seemed to require activity to keep them down ; and for two days, he was the most uneasy, most energetic of mortals.

On the following afternoon, Alfred Herton rode into camp. Randolph was delighted to see him. The infantry Captain came just in time to escape a heavy storm. . . ."

"Why, Randolph," exclaimed his merry friend, "are all your horses lame, that you have not ridden once to see me? I expected you yesterday, and lament you did not come, for I had the honour of a call from Mr. Woodfall, who was accompanied by his daughter. They did not dismount; but the worthy father insisted upon my accompanying them home, and there I spent a very delightful evening, at the close of which both my entertainers expressed their regret at your absence—the father, because he is enraptured with you, and the daughter, because she thought you would have afforded me additional protection on my return to camp."

Randolph was agitated at his reference to Pauline. He was well aware that this delicate allusion of Alfred to the Woodfalls was intended to cheer him, and that Randolph was not expected to put a literal construction upon the relative feelings of the father and the daughter as expressed by him.

Then the friends were startled by a vivid flash of lightning that dashed through the tent, followed by a peal of thunder which shook the earth. These awful messengers were succeeded by torrents of rain, which, although very refreshing to the pastures, were by no means enjoyed by those sheltered beneath canvas roofs. After a while, the heavy rush of waters from above subsided; the dark clouds rolled on to the west, and serenity succeeded this boisterous outbreak of the elements. Night was approaching, and Alfred Horton prepared to leave his friend.

"Farewell, Randolph," he said, "we must hold ourselves prepared to join our comrades at Peekskill. It is the opinion at head-quarters that Sir Henry Clinton will attack us there. This is one object of this hurried

visit, to give you time to prepare for a change of quarters."

"It is not impossible," replied Randolph; "but it will prove a mere exhibition of his weakness. Sir Henry has neither the skill nor the enterprise, even if he has the power, to make such an attack effective; and, if he should venture up the river for this purpose, he will scarcely hold Peekskill beyond the day of its invasion. However, he is very active in massing his troops below, as if he intended to make some use of them, and may march in that direction; but then, he prides himself upon his artfulness in war, and he may be merely employing these devices to mask some other movement."

Alfred was soon beyond the boundaries of the camp.

"Drill," said he to his attendant orderly, as they arrived at intersecting roads, "I shall take the direction of the gorge. It is two miles nearer, and quite as safe. I know the way perfectly."

"That road's not passable, sir," replied the orderly; "it never is after storms. I've lived in this locality long afore I was a soldier, and I never knew anyone try to madden Old Elsie by goin' there after a storm."

"Old Elsie! What folly to keep that old creature in mind. It is quite time that we should cut the chains of her silly charm. We will do so now by riding right through her domain. So put aside your folly and your fears, and come on. If Elsie has aught to say in opposition to my purpose, let her meet me there, and we will test her supernatural powers to their worst."

Drill was horrified at this fearful defiance of his Captain. He sluggishly followed the resolute chief, expecting every instant to see Elsie whirling through the air upon her broomstick, in order to inflict vengeance upon

her bold traducer. The gallant Captain, however, unconscious of the untoward fate to which the fears of his orderly had condemned him, rode slowly forward, deeply impressed with the sublime nature of the scenery, which was made yet wilder by the shadows of approaching night. Suddenly, however, a scream, like that of the human voice, seemed to rush through the air. He reined in his horse and listened, and in the slight interval, Drill rode up, pale with affright.

"Did you hear a cry, Drill?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, in tremulous tones.

"Where did it come from?"

"From the glen, sir," whispered Drill, scarcely above his breath; "'tis Elsie at her imps."

At this moment the cry was repeated. It was now distinctly heard, and was not less plainly a scream of suffering.

"It comes from the hollow near the gorge," exclaimed Alfred. "It is the cry of agony scarcely a remove from death. Spur on, Drill, spur on! There is not a moment to be lost!"

He dashed down the steep path that led to the hollow, regardless of the peril of the way, with that scream of agony ringing in his ears. But that which filled the Captain with energy, depressed the subaltern with fear. Poor Drill, burdened with the superstitions of his youth, believed that the cries were uttered by the spirit of the mountains, with no other object than to allure his leader and himself to their destruction; but too faithful to retreat while his superior officer had gone forward, he cautiously descended to the gorge, prepared to meet his fate like a true soldier.

Captain Horton soon stood by the stream rushing from

the gorge. It was a deep, foaming torrent, and the passage of the road seemed effectually closed to man or horse. Then a third prolonged scream met his ear and died into a moan. Alfred was transfixed with horror. The sight that met his eye was most appalling. The waters of the glen were driving through the narrow throat of the gorge with frightful velocity, and just at a point where their force was greatest, where the rock was hard, rugged, and unyielding, and where a more extended reservoir received the waters and hurled them across the road, a female was seen suspended by her hands, clinging to the rock with a desperation that exhibited the fearfulness of her struggle against impending death. Around boiled the turbulent waters, as if impatient for a prey that only held to life by such a fragile tenure. It occupied but a moment for Alfred to comprehend the frightful peril of this sufferer. He caught one gleam of her dark, expressive eye, full of hope and pleading eloquence, such as is denied to language. Leaping from his horse, and disdaining the fury of the flood, he exclaimed:—

“Be firm, dear lady! I will come to your rescue. I will succour you or perish in the torrent.”

As he entered the stream he felt himself drawn violently back. Drill was upon him.

“’Tis a fetch. ’Tis Elsie. It’s no maiden in distress. They are the bones of old Elsie, dressed in a maiden’s skin. You’ll perish if you go! She’ll roll you down the stream as she’s done hundreds of others, and then laugh over your fate! Don’t go. Come back!”

Alfred paused for a moment under the influence of this vehement appeal of his orderly; but another glance from that imploring face was enough. He plunged into the stream, and boldly fought his way toward the drowning

lady. The fierce waters, as if jealous of their victim, seemed to roll with increased fury from the gorge. Thrice was Alfred hurled several yards down the stream; but his vigorous limbs enabled him to recover; he repeated his struggle, and at length worked his way to the mouth of the gorge. There was the crisis of the battle, for there the current was strongest, and he had to turn an angle of the rock before he could reach the stranger. He was weakened by his incessant efforts, while the current had a never-failing strength. By perseverance, however, he discovered a crevice in the rock. He thrust in his hand, and despite the heavy rush of waters, he passed the angle, and the next instant his arm encircled the waist of the drowning girl; he had deprived of their prey the hungry waters. She was just sensible of her deliverance. Her hands relaxed their grasp, her eyes closed, and her head fell upon the shoulder of the brave man who had rescued her. A thrill of happiness shot through Alfred's heart. Though plunged nearly to his neck in water, with a stream so powerful that he could only retain his standing by a firm hold upon the rock, with failing strength, and additional weight to support, he still felt this the happiest moment of his life. But he was not amphibious, and, happy as he was, he could not long dwell there. He therefore prepared to escape, not without much solicitude as to the manner in which he should succeed. Once quitting his hold upon the rock, he well knew that he must, for a time be at the mercy of the current. He was more timid, now that he had additional care, and he also felt in reference to himself, that if he could be allowed to live for her whom he now held, that life to him would be very precious.

The faithful Drill had not been idle. He regretted

the infatuation of his Captain, which he ascribed to enchantment; yet his belief in the great powers of Elsie did not prevent his making the utmost efforts to protect his officer's life. The sun had set, but there still was enough light to perceive distinctly all that passed. Drill witnessed with horror the ardour with which Alfred grasped the witch, who, he believed, had rendered herself so fair and youthful. He was now in the siren's meshes—a sacrifice to his bold humanity. With martial deliberation, however, this brave soldier prepared to oppose the witch's diabolical schemes. To his own two horses he added a third, that he had found picketed to a tree, and, placing them side by side, led them into the foaming waters. At first they plunged and became unmanageable, but his firm hold of the reins and his determined conduct secured their obedience. This living barrier only gave him command of the shallower and less turbulent portion of the torrent; but as he still stood at the heads of the animals, with their united bridles grasped tightly in his hand, he found he could cast himself into the most dangerous portion of the current, and yet recover his position by means of the reins. This device the shrewd orderly put into practice twice, that he might be prepared for the emergency he felt must come. The horses behaved admirably, and withstood the severe haul upon their heads with resolute endurance.

Captain Horton was unconscious of the sagacious preparations which his servant was making for his assistance. He still clasped his charge closely to his heart: but, unable to afford her that attention which her sinking state demanded, he determined to abandon his hold upon the rocks, and commit himself to the fury of the waters, trusting to his strength, as he had done before,

to overcome their mercilessness. But no sooner did he release his hold, than the force of the current drove him from his footing. At the same moment the lady, who had rested so helplessly on his shoulder, awakened suddenly to new terrors, folded her arms around his neck, and clinging there, as if indulging that fatal rancour against which Drill had cautioned him, added so much to his embarrassment that he became incapable of putting forth those great efforts demanded by the danger. He and his burden were hurried together down the foaming stream. Then came the triumph of the dauntless Drill. He stood ready for the crisis which he had foreseen. Leaping into the flood just as the victims were borne past him, still grasping the reins, he seized the Captain by his collar. For a single instant he lost his footing ; but by his strength he recovered it, and then attempted to draw the Captain toward the land.

" Knock off the witch," he cried, " or she'll kill you," and he would himself have enforced these instructions had not his hand been occupied with the reins ; but Alfred did not release the fair form that he had ventured his life to save.

The horses, alarmed at the struggle in the water, began to plunge and recede from the boiling stream, and thus became involuntary instruments of preservation, for they drew Drill from his danger, and with him Alfred and the lady, whom the persistent orderly still regarded as a witch. One thing, however, was rendered plain to Drill, that, whatever efforts she might have made for the destruction of his Captain, some greater power had ordained his safety. This incident appeased him. Alfred, weak and shaken, stood upon the road, supporting the lady in his arms. He was grateful for her life—grateful

for his own, and, extending his hand to Drill, he said warmly:—

"You are a gallant fellow, my worthy friend. I owe you my life; nay, I owe you far more than that," and he pressed the lady to his heart. "I know not how to repay your attachment and your valour. But see here, this lady is sinking beneath the horrors from which she has escaped. Pray help me to assist her. Where is my horse-cloak? Ah, that is warm and dry. Thank you, good Drill. But she wants more care than we can afford her. Is there any house near by, to which we can convey her?"

"There used to be a cabin about half a mile from here," replied Drill. "Shall we go there?"

"Yes. You lead on; I will attend to the lady," said Alfred.

He then placed her upon his own saddle, and, mounting behind, in that manner supported her insensible form. The orderly led the way, and they soon reached the cabin, only to find it tenantless; but there was another residence within a mile. Thither they proceeded, and were more fortunate. It was a comfortable homestead, and the instant the house-wife understood that distress was at the door, she rushed forward to give help and comfort.

"We are soldiers," said Alfred, "who have rescued this lady from drowning, and have brought her here for your kind care."

"From drownin'!" exclaimed the woman, repressing her curiosity to learn who she was and where the accident occurred; "poor thing, poor thing, I'll do my best for her!" and without further ceremony the hospitable creature lifted the inanimate form from the saddle and

conveyed her inside the dwelling. Then, as the collar of the cloak fell partially back and revealed the pallid face of the still unconscious maiden, the good woman exclaimed, in accents of astonishment: "Why, if it ain't Miss Amy Ward, the squire's daughter! What could she ha' bin after to get into the water, so well as she knows the country!"

Captain Horton remained outside the house, while the woman busied herself in various applications. He had learned the name of the rescued girl; and now that he had done so, there seemed to him more music in the name of Amy than in any other he had ever heard. The officer and his orderly sat more than an hour upon the stoop, when the door opened and the lady, attired in a somewhat graceless wardrobe, slowly approached them. Alfred advanced to meet her. She caught his hand, pressed it with fervour, and, in a voice almost too weak to be distinguished, said:—

"If I had the voice of health and strength, I could not speak my feelings. You have saved me from a fearful death, and your intrepid conduct will remain in my heart for ever. May I ask your support to my horse, for I am resolved to attempt the journey home."

"Have they no waggon here, that you can be driven in?" inquired Alfred, anxious to divert the conversation from the occurrence at the gorge.

"They have none," she replied; "besides, I prefer the back of Firebrand. It is far easier than a carriage, on these rough roads. A wish from me and he will creep forward as easily as an insect upon a leaf."

Alfred raised her to the saddle with the utmost care, and then said:—

"With your permission, we will ride with you, lady.

To allow you to travel alone in this weak state would be to leave our duty half performed, which is ever a reproach to a good soldier."

"I will not reject your aid," said Amy, with a smile that did not wholly conceal her sufferings; "nay, I will acknowledge that it would give me much pain to separate from you so soon, for no one can express the sweet reliance which draws the debtor to the creditor, when the debt is life, but the one who has incurred the obligation."

Then she spoke a few kind words to the woman of the house, and bade her farewell, and the horses moved gently forward. It was soon perceived that she had not overrated the almost stealthy movement of the gallant Firebrand, for the noble animal proceeded with the caution of a tender friend.

"We have full three miles to ride," said Amy, after they had quitted the house; but she spoke in a very low and faltering voice.

"Can I support you in any way?" asked Alfred, with great concern. "It is a long distance for you."

"Still, I think I can sustain myself," replied Amy; "but I will not hesitate to apply to you if I need your assistance. I feel pleasure in having you near me, and I shall lean upon you with confidence."

"Whatever affords ease to you gives happiness to me," said Alfred, delighted at the feeling exhibited by the lady, though not a little alarmed at her weak state.

Not another word was uttered until lights were seen glittering between the trees.

"There is my father's house," Amy then remarked. "I am very thankful that I have reached home."

"Who's there?" demanded a voice but a few yards distant.

"Father," replied Amy, "it is I."

"Why, Amy, my dear girl," said her father, advancing beside the saddle, "where have you been till so late an hour? I have long been most anxious for your return. Who are those with you?"

"Soldiers, father," replied Amy; "heroic men, who have saved your daughter's life."

She fell into her father's arms, unable longer to bear up. He carried her to the house. Alfred and his orderly followed, waiting in the reception-room to learn the state of their charge before their departure. At length the father appeared, and announced that his daughter was still insensible; but that as she was composed, and every care was being taken, he trusted to find her convalescent by morning. Then he listened with great attention to the narrative of his daughter's peril and her rescue; expressing his gratitude in such unmeasured terms that, although Alfred announced to him they were far from their camp and must be on their road, the good man would not permit their departure. He ordered refreshments, directed their horses to be fed, and used every effort to detain them for the night; but the officer assigned his military duties, and promising to ride over next day to see after his charge, he left the hospitable roof beneath which remained one who had stirred the deepest feelings of his soul.

Captain Horton rode toward his camp silently and thoughtfully. He had now time to review the occurrences of the last few hours. He shuddered at the dangers which had surrounded Miss Ward, but admired the firmness with which she had conquered them; for although she attributed the preservation of her life to him, much of his success was due to her own bravery and

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endurance. But the incident on which he most dwelt was the ride to the Squire's residence, when in the pure feeling of her unbounded gratitude she requested him to be her companion home, when she declared (her words unqualified by the conventionalities of life) that she could not so soon separate from him; when, on the fatiguing journey, she rested upon him for support, as would a child upon the bosom of its parent, a sister upon a brother, or a wife upon a husband. The words she spoke were brief, and the circumstances of the ride were simple; but Alfred felt that the sincerity of her very soul was in all she said and did. He had, indeed, become an ardent admirer of the fair Amy.

The faithful Drill, too, had his meditations. His mind was occupied with the mystery of the night. He wondered how this lady, if she really was the daughter of the Squire, could have reached the spot where she was discovered. Her woman's strength never could have braved the furious rush of waters that issued from the gorge, unless she had received more than human assistance. Was it Elsie who had, by some influence known to witchcraft, induced this resistless girl to descend from her steed, to hitch him to the tree, and then to follow into the dangers of this gaping gully, where she was abandoned to destruction? This conjecture was acceptable to his reason, for his mind rejected argument that did not yield to Elsie the possession of superhuman power. Then, assuming this to be true, what might be the consequence to those who had so daringly thwarted the revenge of this fell witch? Could he and his officer hope to escape her malignity? But Drill was at this moment awakened to more immediate danger by a hoarse voice crying "Stand!" Looking, he perceived a musket levelled at

his head. He had unconsciously come upon a sentinel. He gave the countersign, passed within the lines, and both he and his officer soon retired to indulge their musings with less peril to their brains.

CHAPTER IV

THE BROKEN WHEEL.

THE next morning after the storm, when the usual routine of duty had been performed, Captain Murray mounted his noble Malvern, and proceeded toward Mr. Woodfall's. In this visit to the father was concealed the desire to meet the daughter, that he might behold that loveliness which had made such an impression upon his mind as quite to absorb his thoughts. The ride was bleak and mountainous, varied by hill and dale; but to Randolph all scenery was alike. The only estimate of the beautiful was already in his eye, and could not be removed by mountain, stream, or forest. At length he reached the house, when Mr. Woodfall, who had seen him from the window, in the warmth of hospitality hastened to the door and welcomed his guest most heartily.

"Now, Captain Murray," exclaimed the cheerful host, "pray add to my joy at your arrival, by allowing me to consider you my guest for the day."

"I fear, sir, that I dare not promise that," replied Randolph, looking in vain for Pauline, who might have influenced his decision; "I have military duties yet unperformed."

"They must be mere duties of parade, and will proceed under the supervision of your subalterns," observed Mr. Woodfall, pleasantly, "for I know enough of your character to be well assured that you would not be paying a

visit of courtesy to a poor recluse while there was a duty worthy of your attention undischarged."

"You flatter me highly, sir," said Randolph, smiling. "I must guard my weakness in that respect, or I may fall a victim to your adulation."

"No, sir," replied Mr. Woodfall, with great solemnity, "you have too much strength of character to be injured by flattery. But let us not travel from the main question. You will not refuse to remain the day?"

"I fear that, notwithstanding your prediction of my fortitude, I am about to give evidence of my feebleness, and to reply that, if it will contribute to your satisfaction, I shall have great pleasure in remaining," replied he.

"It will afford me the utmost satisfaction," said Mr. Woodfall, "for I should otherwise be alone to-day, as my daughter has gone to some distance, on a visit to a sick friend."

The dragoon Captain was unprepared for this announcement. It dashed into fragments the prospective happiness for the day. He could not suspect Mr. Woodfall of thus urging his invitation, and then designedly following his concurrence by this mode of torture; but it was, nevertheless, very like it, and had Mr. Woodfall been a close observer, he might have distinctly read upon the forehead of the warrior both anger and chagrin, as he spoke of his daughter's absence. In a few minutes, however, the better feelings of the guest triumphed; he blushed to have done so much injustice to his generous host, and observed:—

"I regret the absence of your daughter, though I am glad that you think I can contribute to your comfort in the meanwhile."

A sudden voice, as of the entrance of some persons in

the hall, prevented Mr. Woodfall from replying. It was thought that other visitors had arrived, when the door opened, and the servant announced :—

“ Miss Pauline.”

“ Miss Pauline !” exclaimed the puzzled Woodfall.

“ Yes, father, it is I,” replied Miss Pauline, entering ;
“ a most provoking accident has brought me back again.”

A blush suffused her face as she discovered a stranger with her father whom she had left alone, and it deepened when she perceived that it was Captain Murray.

Randolph advanced toward her, smiling.

“ I cannot condole with you on the accident, so that it has left you uninjured,” he said, “ for it has permitted me the opportunity of seeing you before I am summoned to more active duties.”

“ But, my dear girl,” interposed Mr. Woodfall, “ what has led to your return ?”

“ A broken wheel, dear father,” responded Pauline.

“ Shattered, no doubt,” said Randolph, laughingly,
“ by that ubiquitous contriver of good and evil, Elsie Turner, of whom, on this occasion, I will not complain.”

“ You are right, Captain Murray,” said Mr. Woodfall, merrily, “ there is not a person in the house but will ascribe the accident to old Elsie ; but like you, not one will dare blame her for it, under the impression that the very air is a tell-tale. But retire and remove your bonnet, Pauline, and join us here, for I trust that Captain Murray will be no less inclined to remain the day because you are added to our party.”

“ Oh,” exclaimed Randolph, with delight visibly written on his face, “ such an honour will be an incentive to our enjoyment. To me, the broken wheel is a wheel of fortune.”

Pauline retired from the room, but soon reappeared to add by her presence a new zest to conversation and enjoyment. Singing and music were introduced ; then came dinner ; after which, Mr. Woodfall claimed the indulgence of his usual mid-day "nap." Left alone to themselves, Randolph proposed to Pauline a ramble in the garden, to which she assented.

"You did not dance when you visited us," observed Pauline, as they stood upon the lawn.

"No," responded the Captain, "I did not indulge in that pleasure. I know not why, unless with Oriental indolence, I esteemed it the greater luxury to gaze upon the dancers, or that the lady whose hand I would have sought was so much solicited by others, that a poor dragoon knew not whether he might presume to the honour."

"Captain Murray could have asked no lady to accompany him to the dance who would not have accepted him with pleasure," replied Pauline.

And thus they talked, as they slowly pursued their way down the garden, where they retraced those paths and windings which had before occasioned Randolph so much delight. The day was bright and pleasant. The storm of the previous morning had refreshed and invigorated the grass and foliage. It was a charming time to be abroad. Perhaps some other presence was there also, to lend its enchantment to the moment. Be this as it may, Randolph and Pauline seemed insensible to distance, and did not awaken from their oblivious dream, until they had reached the extremity of the grounds and stood beneath the deep shadows of those trees which Pauline had before pointed out as the uplands beyond the valley. The lady then contemplated their position with

some alarm; but Randolph, the selfish creature, viewed it with satisfaction, if the chronicle tells the truth.

"Let us hasten our return," said she; "we have unconsciously wandered to a spot never visited even by our stoutest servants; and although there may be no absolute danger here, I have a girlish terror of the wood, and feel most uneasy when near it."

"It is a wild and most beautiful retreat," replied Randolph, gazing around upon the noble trees. "Why is it thus avoided?"

"One cause is, that it is said to be a retreat of Old Elsie, whose name you so rashly connected with a broken wheel," replied Pauline, facetiously, for the moment forgetting her fears, but quietly adding: "It is also said to be a haunt of the notorious Claudie Smith."

"Indeed!" said Randolph, in surprise; "I thought the head-quarters of that freebooter were in the caverns of the Ramapo. Twice my cornet has sought him there with a few troopers without success, but now that I find that this atrocious character troubles my friends with his nearer proximity, I will ride down that bleak valley myself, and try if I cannot shorten his tether."

A noise was distinctly heard. It came from a few yards distant in the background. The speakers turned in alarm toward the spot, but could discover nothing. Only the lower boughs of a large thick cedar tree were still in agitation. Pauline, though unconscious of the action, drew close to Randolph, as if to solicit his protection, exclaiming, in an excited voice:—

"Oh, Captain Murray, there are people here. We are in great danger. Fly, dear sir, fly, or the brigands will seize you!" She spoke with great earnestness.

"What? Do you speak of danger to me and not think

But the incidents of this last hour have banished the thin veil of circumstance which has floated before me, and I am weak enough to take this moment for a confession of my faith in you—of my sincere love for you, Pauline!”

Her averted and downcast gaze slowly turned upon him, and when her tearful eyes rested full and clear upon his face, he read in them the revelation of a loving soul. He pressed her to his heart, her head fell upon his shoulder. Thus was the arch flung over their life's river, and two shores drawn together, with the clear, broad stream of love flowing peacefully between.

How quickly two hours fitted away! Two hours! They seemed but a moment, yet how much bliss was compressed into them! Then came the little monitor to call them to the mansion, where the father, awakened from his repose, wondered at their absence. They proceeded arm-in-arm up the walks—Adam and Eve in Paradise. When they entered the house, Pauline slipped away silently to the privacy of her own chamber, leaving her lover alone to confront the father.

“My dear fellow, where have you been wandering!” inquired Mr. Woodfall, as Murray entered. “Why, I have been twice awake and as often slept again, that I might be as little conscious of your absence as possible.”

“I am glad that you had such a comfortable resource in your extremity,” replied Randolph, laughing, while Mr. Woodfall joined in the merriment.

Then, as a preliminary narrative to a more important revelation, Randolph informed Mr. Woodfall of the alarm which Pauline had experienced in the forest, concealing, of course, those trifling episodes of which the *dénouement* occurred upon the rustic chair.

“I have no doubt but that it was Claudie whom you

disturbed, or some of his brigands," observed Mr. Woodfall. "It is said that he occasionally occupies that wood, from which I have no power to dislodge him; but just now I think that I am aware of his reason for being so near my residence. He is a good horseman, is choice in the cattle he bestrides, and wishes to add a very choice animal of mine to his own stud. When this circumstance came to my knowledge, I knew that there was no safety in the stable, so I removed the animal thence to the cellar, where he still remains, surrounded by every security which the house affords."

"This increases the danger to yourself, without removing it from the horse," said Randolph, "for a desperate and powerful rogue like Claudie would as willingly enter your dwelling as your stable, and then you might neither save your horse nor escape his vengeance. Commit the horse to my charge. I will ride him to the encampment, where I engage he shall be well treated, and if this scoundrel still wishes for the animal, he had better demand it of my troopers."

"But, having seen you, he will now watch for your departure," replied Mr. Woodfall, "and when he perceives that you ride my horse, his rage would be unbounded. He certainly would take steps to intercept you."

"That is precisely my own opinion," said Randolph. "I should thus withdraw the danger from your house. You must leave me to deal with him, and remember that a soldier thinks but little of these encounters."

"It is too generous a proposal to be entertained," replied Mr. Woodfall, sensibly affected. "It would be better to turn the horse loose, than expose you to the vengeance of this marauder."

"Oh, be not alarmed," said the Captain, smiling.

"wolves like these, that prowl the woods at night, are more careful of their own bodies than you imagine, and would be unlikely to assail one who has a hundred fierce troopers to avenge his fall."

Mr. Woodfall would not yield to Randolph's arguments, but reserved his decision.

"But I have not disclosed to you all that transpired in and near the wood," said Randolph, with more gravity. "I have some difficulty in approaching the subject, because I fear—"

"Some misfortune has occurred to Pauline!" exclaimed Mr. Woodfall, leaping from his chair. "I did not remark her absence. Where is she?"

"Be calm, my dear sir; reseal yourself, and give me a few moments' hearing," said the dragoon, calmly; "something has occurred to Miss Woodfall, which she does not characterize as a misfortune, and my hope is that you may not do so either."

Randolph then deliberately avowed his love for Pauline, and the interest he occupied in her heart. He spoke with so much earnestness and affection, that Mr. Woodfall was deeply moved. He could not immediately reply; but when Pauline entered the apartment, she saw the hands of her father and Randolph clasped in each other. She read in that grasp the seal of her own bond and transfer to another. Mr. Woodfall folded her to his heart; then placing her hand in that of Randolph, he pronounced upon them a benediction that went with them to the grave—a blessing for ever.

"Your acquaintance with each other has been very brief," he said, "and perhaps I might have preferred a longer knowledge to have preceded this moment; but I will not make that a subject of regret, for I can vouch

for the sterling qualities of my dear child, and fame has not left me ignorant of the generosity, bravery, and honour of Randolph Murray. Such natures as yours are well fitted for unity. May God bless you as I do, and as I hope you will bless each other."

Mr. Woodfall quitted the room. Randolph clasped Pauline to his breast, and they stood in speechless rapture, while this paternal blessing flooded their hearts with its solemn peace.

Time was forgotten in the passage of the day. Father, daughter, lover, were so infinitely happy, that they were only reminded of the distance of Randolph from his camp by the approaching shadows of the night. Then Mr. Woodfall whispered in his ear:—

"I have had my horse unearthed from his prison in the cellar, and he now stands pawing at the gate. I have resolved that you shall take him. For, if you did not, you would imagine that his detention here might imperil the safety of the house and Pauline."

"I could not have left without," replied Randolph, "as much in regard for your own safety as that of Pauline; but I will give instructions that the saddle be placed on your horse, which I will ride, for Malvern will follow as faithfully as a dog."

Mr. Woodfall was anxious for Randolph's departure. The pain of separation was much lessened by his promise to return the following day. As Pauline uttered her farewell to Randolph, she said:—

"That broken wheel which turned me from my course this morning, Randolph, was the wheel of fortune after all. If in the kitchen it were known what great events had happened in consequence of the accident, it would be said that Elsie meant me well."

"Then tell them, dearest Pauline," replied Randolph, facetiously, pressing a kiss upon her brow; "that is, if you appreciate their erudite auguries."

Randolph was soon in the saddle, pursuing his journey at a brisk pace. He did not disregard the caution of Mr. Woodfall that he might be followed. But wishing to withdraw all danger from the house, he desired rather than feared the little hazard that might arise to him in undertaking the protection of the horse. The country through which he had to pass was mostly untenanted and favourable to perfidy and ambuscade, being varied by lofty hills, deep valleys, and forest. He had ridden two miles without encountering anyone, and began to apprehend that he had been unsuccessful in his lure—that his departure from Mr. Woodfall's had been unnoticed—when, suddenly, three horsemen darted from the wood. He had little doubt as to the character of the men; but they were not prepared to find that he had passed that spot, for they wheeled to the left while he was at their right. The officer perceived that one of these fellows had a carbine slung at his back, but the others were not so armed. It was a party of the brigands, who, having made a *détour*, thought to intercept Captain Murray on the road. For a few seconds, therefore, Randolph and the brigands rode in opposite directions, when one of the latter accidentally turned his head, and then, with an oath, informed his companions of their error. They turned their horses and redoubled their speed, and by the time Randolph had made such an inspection of them as he desired, they were not more than three hundred yards apart. Randolph put the speed of Mr. Woodfall's animal to the test; he responded bravely to the spur; but the distance between pursuer and

pursued was not increased. The brigands were well mounted, and rode the more savagely for having been thus thwarted.

"Oh, Malvern," said Randolph to his well-trained steed, which ran unbridled beside him, "were you my bearer, we would soon outrun these scoundrels. Yet, there is little honour to the fleet in races such as these, and I only await one signal to turn and face the miscreants, and this, I think, will not be long delayed if we maintain our distance. Hark!" he continued, as a shot was fired, "there is the challenge to rein up. The weapon was well handled, considering the distance and the pace. I distinctly heard its shriek, the ball passed within a few inches of my life. But now that I am equal to these villains in firearms, we will wheel and face the dogs, for my troopers must not see their leader flying before only three horse-thieves."

Randolph drew in his horse, and fronted his audacious pursuers. The noble Malvern performed the same evolution, as if he were guided by a martial rider. The brigands, astonished at this sudden change from flight to defiance, with no advantage on their part in the chase, were intimidated, and halted at a distance of about sixty yards. The sun had set, but it was twilight, and there was sufficient radiance for Randolph to perceive the actions of his adversaries.

"What mean you," he exclaimed, and his eye began to emit that fire which ever kindled in the battle, "by thus pursuing a soldier of the Republic? Ha! You scoundrel on the extreme right, are you preparing to reply? Let fall that carbine. Drop it on the ground; I say. My pistols kill at sixty yards," continued Randolph, withdrawing a pistol from his holster, "and I

trate to old Elsie's dwelling? I must try and fathom this mystery, for mystery there is. How odd that Horton should have passed that way at that moment! I hope the poor fellow will escape heart-whole." He again paused, and was silently thoughtful. At length he recommenced: "Dear as will be every minute of the morrow, I will steal an hour from my duties, and do the same injustice to my sweet Pauline, to see the Squire's daughter."

Randolph passed the night in sleepless happiness. His mind was in such active meditation upon the incidents of the day, that it could not be composed in slumber; nor did the morning, which summoned him to duties, find him inclined to break the enchantment of his thought. But the practical Batman was ignorant of these influences, and, as he found that his Captain had not observed the sun, he entered the tent as a second messenger to announce that the day was passing, and that it was the last before the march. Randolph leaped from his couch at this constructive reproof of his trusted servant, and was soon engaged with his officers in making the necessary arrangement for their departure. The fulfilment of these directions was committed to able hands, and, as soon as his presence could be dispensed with in the camp, he mounted his horse, and directed his course to the residence of Mr. Ward. The worthy Squire welcomed him in his hearty way; he was, however, in great consternation at what he termed the baseness of Elsie, in attempting to allure his daughter into her power, and expressed his fears at the approach of the "Britishers," as well as at the departure of the troops so long quartered in that vicinity. It was not perceptible which subject he viewed with most regret, he spoke so energetically of each.

"But come in, Cap'n," continued the Squire, "p'raps Amy would like to see you afore you go. Cap'n Horton was here three times yesterday, and the last time he asked to see Amy, and, tho' she was no' so well, she would not refuse him, and I never saw a man so cut up. Well, he's a mighty feller anyhow, and I shall take as a great favour, too, ef you ken do him a service."

Mrs. Ward here entered the room. She approached Randolph with great pleasure.

"I am glad to see you, Captain Murray," said that lady, "and poor Amy seems quite revived, even at the sound of your voice. Her eye has not been so bright since that dreadful accident befell her. She is in the adjoining room; will you walk in and see her?"

Randolph consented, and he was soon in the presence of the daughter. She was pillowed in an easy-chair. There was a smile upon her face as Randolph entered, but it could not conceal the pain and exhaustion of her spirits. He took her fair hand, as he said:—

"I did not hear of your calamity until last night—"

"And you have thus promptly ridden over to see me?" interposed Amy. "Thank you. I am grateful for your kindness. The slight hold I have on life—for I am very weak—I owe to your brave and gallant friend, Captain Horton. I saw him yesterday. I perceived that he was shocked at my appearance; he took my hand, pressed it, and was so much affected that poor mother led him from the room before a word was spoken, and thus we met and parted."

Amy paused, for her utterance was choked. Tears coursed down her cheeks. It was evident that a painful impression had been made upon her mind. At last she remarked:—

"You, too, depart in the morning; and my father tells me that the British are preparing a fearful force against you. It depresses me to find my friends exposed to dangers in which I cannot share, and I shall dread to hear the result of the approaching conflict; but at least I will express my personal hope to the one who is now present, that he will be sure to use due caution in the struggle."

"I am flattered that you take such interest in my safety," replied Randolph. "Your caution shall not be disregarded, and I trust ere long to return to welcome the roses in your cheeks. It is with regret that I yield to the necessity of leaving you; but a soldier's duties are imperative, and they afford me but little time to make my preparations for departure."

"Must you quit so soon?" asked Amy, rousing quickly, as if from pain. "But I ought to know you must; I fear that even the time you have afforded to this visit will be stolen from the duties due to your command. It has, however, contributed much to my comfort. Notwithstanding the danger of the adventure on which you are ordered, I feel that you will return in safety." She paused suddenly, and sighed deeply.

Randolph took her hand, pressed it between his, and then said, with cheerfulness:—

"Farewell, Miss Ward. I may be absent but a few days, and I trust that you will do so much honour to my return as to receive me in good health."

"Farewell, Captain Murray," said Amy, as he quitted the room; and, when he had closed the door and she was left alone, she added: "I feel already better for his presence. I will not believe that false prediction of Elsie. I think he loves me; but—" She hesitated, and

then said, slowly : " If I do not reign unrivalled in his heart, I will not permit another empress there. No—never ! "

Her pale face flushed up for a moment as if in anger ; then became suddenly white. She sunk back in her chair, closed her eyes, and the tears, that would gush through the lids, betrayed the intensity of her feelings.

Randolph was soon on the road to the Woodfall estate.

" Ah," he exclaimed, as he dashed forward at a pace congenial to the impetuous Malvern, " poor Amy is not only very ill, but sadly woeful. No doubt she is deeply affected at the sudden departure of Horton, for it is impossible that she could have seen herself so boldly rescued from death by that gallant fellow and not award him the whole feelings of her heart. But that mystery—I must see Horton about it."

The many miles between the residences of Amy and Pauline were shortened by the speed of his noble horse, and Randolph, ere long, found himself at the door of his beloved. He thought he heard a scream as he rode up, and the next instant the owner threw open the hall doors, rushed down, and grasped his hand in great agitation.

" What is it ? " exclaimed Randolph. " Where is Pauline ? "

This question seemed to recall the excited father to more thoughtfulness, and, without uttering a word, he hurried with Randolph to the parlour, where stood Pauline, scarcely able to support herself. Now that he saw both father and daughter uninjured before him, he felt comparatively relieved. Whatever calamity they had to narrate he could hear with composure.

" Oh, Randolph ! " at length exclaimed Pauline, " how terrible ! "

"Let us dismiss from our minds all that is terrible; dearest Pauline," said Randolph, "for time to us is most precious—confined to a few hours. I am ordered to join the army at Peekskill to-morrow morning. What is it?"

"We heard that you were attacked by Claudie," replied she.

"And is that all?" asked Randolph, pressing Pauline to his heart.

"Why did you ride that horse?" asked Pauline, instead of responding to the question.

"There was no danger in a circumstance so simple," replied Murray. "Three fellows followed me, one of whom carried a carbine. We had an exciting race for a short distance, to my shame, for I do not believe that a man in my troop would have turned his back upon such villains; but the instant the carbine was discharged I wheeled around and faced my pursuers, and they, after a time, retired; though not until two of my men were discerned in the distance, bearing despatches for me."

"And were you not injured, Randolph?" said Pauline.

"Nay, dearest Pauline," replied Randolph. "They did not approach me within sixty yards."

"This morning we were assured that you were attacked and slain," said Mr. Woodfall. "I immediately despatched a messenger to your camp to ascertain the truth, and while we were awaiting his return with the utmost anxiety, you appear in person. Pauline uttered a scream as you passed the window. But thank God that you are preserved to us and to your country."

Then the conversation turned upon Peekskill; but soon Mr. Woodfall withdrew, and Pauline and Randolph were together, alone.

"I know what sorrow I entail upon you, dearest Pau-

line," said Randolph, "in my inconsiderate conduct in revealing to you an affection I ought to have concealed. I have been actuated by too much regard for my own feelings and too little for yours. But I was not prepared for this rapid removal, or I might have spared you this suffering."

"You must not speak thus, dear Randolph," said Pauline. "You must not imagine that I would have the relation between us other than it is. If I mourn your absence, I solace my feelings by the hope that the love I have pledged adds to your happiness, and lightens those duties that might otherwise seem severe. If I tremble at your danger, it is in the greatness of my love; not because I would withdraw you from the ranks where you so nobly battle for the liberties of your country. There is a position of usefulness even to poor helpless women in this struggle; for, as her beloved ones advance to the combat, she need but place upon them the armour of her love to make them yet more formidable. My heart may bleed to make the sacrifice, dearest Randolph; but I would not have you swerve one inch from the path of honour, because an enemy's sword was in your way. That fame which you have so gallantly and nobly won must not be sullied by one thought of Pauline Woodfall's weakness and want of devotion to your honour."

"Noble Pauline! Fit woman for a soldier's wife! Such sentiments will give energy to my arm when it is most needed, and shed a lustre upon my sword. Until this moment I was ignorant of the true worth of the jewel which I have won, and now wonder at my temerity in the pursuit of such a prize."

"Then do not seek to retain your influence by flattery," said Pauline, with a look of humorous reproach; "for,

though such fare may be dainty to the palate, it is unnutritious to the heart."

"I would not insult you with flattery, dearest Pauline," replied Randolph; "but we have much to speak of. Tomorrow we shall be separated by the waters of the Hudson, and soon after the enemy may raise his banner between us."

"But neither that river nor the pennant of our enemies will obstruct our love."

"No, no," said Randolph, "that sacred feeling is hidden in our hearts, and will, I trust, depart with our souls to sweeten immortality."

"Amen!" ejaculated Pauline, with a solemnity that affected both.

They passed from the room in silence, and then entered the garden by the door near where Randolph had once stood gazing upon the dancers on the lawn. They walked down the fragrant avenues, communing only with their eyes, until they reached the rustic chair to which they had, on a former eventful occasion, descended from the upland wood. The chair was surrounded by a bower of roses, and beneath this floral canopy the lovers were soon seated.

"I reverence this spot, dearest Pauline," said Randolph, "for here were forged for me the sweetest fetters ever worn by man. Never did soldier embrace a captive life with so much ecstasy, nor regard custodian with such faith and tenderness."

"Yet, has it not occurred to you, Randolph," said Pauline, archly, "that your gaoler might be no less a prisoner than yourself, although you seem the only person chained?"

"Yes, Pauline," replied Randolph, "for only yesterday

the sentiment was whispered in my ear by the only angel voice that could have reached my soul. But how a rough trooper like Randolph Murray could penetrate the heart of so sweet a flower as Pauline Woodfall, is to me a subject of as much astonishment as delight."

Thus Pauline and Randolph conversed together, and thus they analyzed their love; and in this communion they indulged until they were disturbed by a messenger from Mr. Woodfall, who reminded them of the decline of day. Randolph was surprised to discover that the sun was approaching the horizon. He could keep no reckoning of hours in such society as Pauline's; but remorseless Time had been more persistent in his chronicle, and had registered every second to the prejudice of these devoted lovers, with as much indifference as if this was not their day of separation. However, at the paternal summons, Pauline arose, and together they advanced to the house.

Mr. Woodfall met them with a smile. He affected not to observe the maidenly blush upon his daughter's cheek; but, taking Randolph on one side, he said:—

"I have learned the particulars of last night's adventure from my messenger to your camp. It was a position of great peril, and to one of less boldness of character than yourself might have proved fatal. As it is, it will engender a feeling of revenge in the mind of the implacable Claudie, who is watchful, unscrupulous, and artful. Under this apprehension, I despatched another messenger to your camp, to call out an escort of your men here this evening to accompany you back."

"It was kind and thoughtful of you, sir," replied Randolph, quite certain that such orders would receive no attention from the practical Groves; "but there was no necessity for such precaution."

"Indeed, sir, but for the confidence I feel in this protection," continued Mr. Woodfall, "I would not have detained you even thus late at my house."

"Oh, then, I must rejoice in all that you have done," rejoined Randolph, humorously, "if the alternative were a breach of hospitality."

"You must not characterize my anxiety by such a hostile distinction," said Mr. Woodfall. "I reproach myself severely for the danger in which I have placed you, and you must pardon me for employing these rather officious means to insure your safety."

"I fully esteem your motive," replied Randolph; "but I cannot permit you to blame yourself for a responsibility I willingly, nay, importunately assumed. As for the danger of offending such enemies as horse-thieves and cowboys, I can only regard it with contempt, and lament that it should have fallen to my hand to inflict correction on one of such a gang."

"That is a military as well as an honourable feeling," remarked Mr. Woodfall, "and would be mine, were I backed by a hundred sabres; but we isolated civilians find conciliation the only policy we can pursue. To be sure, when this Claudie demanded my best horse, I resisted the bandit, and proffered him an animal slightly its inferior, which he as pertinaciously rejected; but this departure from my temporizing principle has led only to calamity, and those men who have lost their comrade will be fired by a spirit of vengeance, which, perhaps, even their leader may not be able for a day or two to check."

"Well, my dear sir," replied Randolph, "you have provided me against danger by sending for an escort; although, in my opinion, both Mr. Claudie and his

brother scoundrels will be cautious how they provoke the vengeance of our troop."

While thus conversing, the door of the apartment opened, and a servant, to whom Randolph had entrusted the hour at which he must depart, appeared and announced that it had arrived.

Randolph was agitated at this sudden disturbance to his happiness ; but, much as he loved Pauline, he did not hesitate to respond to the call of honour. He pressed the fair girl to his heart, and affected a courage that was not there in his efforts to console her.

"Be comforted, my Pauline," he said, "my absence will be of short duration—my danger scarcely worth a thought. Dispel your sorrow, as I do, in the hope of a rapid and safe return."

"I do seek support in hope, dear Randolph," replied Pauline ; "and were you about to participate in perils less terrible than those of the battle-field, I should find solace in that resource ; but in these frightful encounters, hope looks forbodingly upon me."

Captain Murray hastened to the hall door, where stood the excited Mr. Woodfall, listening for the distant sound of the expected horsemen. He implored Randolph not to depart until the arrival of the escort, while the fiery Malvern, impatient at delay, stood pawing the earth as if in reproach of the timid persuasion of the host. The mind of Randolph, however, was too much occupied to permit him to afford much attention to the representations of Mr. Woodfall. He was eager to plunge into the darkness of the night, and be alone with his own thoughts. He grasped Mr. Woodfall's hand, saying :—

"Farewell, dear sir ; we shall soon meet again."

He then leaped upon his horse, and soon the only sound

that broke the deep silence of the night was the echo of his swift courser's feet.

"Well, Groves," said Randolph, on entering the camp and encountering his cornet, "so you did not send a guard to escort me through the pass?"

"No, no, sir," replied that officer, smiling; "a messenger came into camp, pale and breathless, his horse covered with foam, enumerating the dangers that he had escaped, and to which you would be exposed; but he was too much of a coward to be heeded, and as no order came from you, I declined to act upon such information. The poor fellow was so terrified, that I was induced to send a corporal's guard to escort him back, though I could not learn that he encountered anything in his journey here more frightful than the loneliness of the road. As to yourself, sir, I did not believe that those scoundrels would attempt to assail you again, after the example of the other night; but if they should, I knew that upon the back of that bold war-horse you were equal to double the number that you defied when mounted upon that Woodfall colt."

Randolph soon retired to his tent to prepare for the morrow's duties by securing the rest he so much needed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BRIGAND'S MOUNTAIN RETREAT.

IN a vault in the bowels of the earth, more fitted for a catacomb than a dwelling, sat a man of Herculean frame in deep meditation. His chair was a niche in the stone side of the gloomy cavern. His brows were knitted; deep furrrows were perceptible in the face, while his sunken eyes sparkled with impatient anger. The

expression of the lower features of his visage was hidden by his ample moustache and beard, which wholly concealed his mouth. He wore upon his head a mole-skin cap, fringed with portions of a wolf's hide, into which was inserted an eagle's feather, which remarkable head-gear was intended to be symbolical that its wearer would follow his enemies whether they retreated into the earth, the air, or were secreted in the forest.

This giant was Claudius Smith, the brigand chief of the Ramapo, but more familiarly spoken of as Claudie. He was greatly feared throughout all that wild section, and the terror of his name soon spread into more distant parts. His escapes had been so numerous and so marvellous, that the ignorant and credulous believed him to be endowed with more than mortal power. He had a formidable band of followers, who were well armed and rode horses of great speed, which, when worn and broken, they would exchange for others equally superior, stolen from those known to possess such animals, and who knew that to resist such marauders would be instant death. The country people feared both the chieftain and his men, and no one had the temerity to approach the Ramapo, or to seek his cattle if they were enticed to the brigand's rich pastures, for he might share their fate in being slain. Twice these bold villains had defeated the efforts of small detachments of the American army, commissioned for their suppression, and they had as often adroitly eluded the power of larger forces, so that their conquest was esteemed by many as impossible, and it was reported, among other wondrous stories, that Claudie could ride for miles beneath the hills of the Ramapo, and thus defy pursuit.

At some distance from this modern Samson, and in

what might be deemed another apartment, as the rocky walls approached so near in the interval as to form a single open archway, were grouped a number of the followers of this chief, around a blazing fire, the smoke of which, ascending with the flame, curled along the arched roof in search of some aperture for escape. The men, grouped in various attitudes upon the hard, rough floor of the cave, were indulging in noisy, desultory conversation, varied by hideous roars of laughter ; but the subject most interesting to the assemblage seemed to be a certain mug of some exhilarating beverage, which each disciple alternately grasped in his brawny hand, as if it contained the elixir for a better life, instead of the fluid of all evil. A thin curtain of mist interposed between the chief's stone-chair and his merry rogues, and thus afforded a more graphic effect to the picture at the fire, when viewed through the vaulted arch. But he alone to whom this scene was available remained in his stern silence. The men, who knew that their chief had retired to his meditative chair, were not less vehement or boisterous in their language, and he would not, by a word, disturb the enjoyment of their revel. The mind of the chief, however, was inaccessible to ordinary influences when deeply occupied, for there was a power of concentration evidenced in his projecting brow, that might have fitted him at this great period of his country's trial for a valuable addition to her heroes, had he not become one of her outcasts.

In the midst of this clamor, at a sign from one of the number, silence was restored, and each man arose from his reclining position. The revellers, filling up their drinking-cups at a sign from the lieutenant, commenced singing the following words, while the vaults echoed the song in a voice of equal thunder :—

Welcome, brethren of the sword,
Welcome beneath the earth ;
Welcome to our watch and ward,
Thrice welcome to our mirth !
Our chieftain sits on his chair of stone,
To him a throne of state ;
Behold ! he sits in the council alone—
Doff caps to our chief and mate !

During this song, a number of bandits, just in from duty, were seen advancing along the lengthy gallery of the cave, who when they reached the noisy assembly, raised their caps in the air and bowed toward the arch, as a salute of courtesy to the thoughtful Claudie. Then, each of the new-comers, receiving in his hand the brimming cup from one of his companions who had thus welcomed him, joined heartily and lustily in the following chorus :—

Let us quaff from the jug,
The tankard or mug,
And enjoy the sweets of the potion ;
For, in our struggles for pelf,
We may encounter that elf
Grim Death—who may gainsay the notion.

What more of rude sarcasm the other stanzas of this song might have contained on that great leveller is yet unknown, for while they paused for an instant to refresh their throats, ere they carolled the coming verse, a voice thundered from the “chair of state,” to which they had just before so courteously bowed :—

“Rogues, is your own noise so great that you cannot hear that a horse is in the ravine, while your own animals are all stabled ?”

The response was in action. Not a word was spoken in reply to this reproof ; but each man, casting down his drinking vessel, rushed hastily through the dark gallery, along which their brethren had so lately passed, and, in

another instant, all was silent in that gloomy abode. The fire still burnt, and, as its fitful flame rose into the air, and light and shadow fell upon the rugged walls, they disclosed a retreat where nothing but shame and infamy could choose to abide.

The chieftain of the band remained in his stall of stone. His practised ear had detected the footfalls of a horse in the vicinity of his haunt, and now that his men had gone in search, and would emerge into the air by numerous different routes that radiated in secret avenues at the end of the long gallery, he felt assured that he should soon have the delinquent in his grasp. He was not wrong. Ere long, he heard the tramp of his men along the gallery, and he knew by a peculiar signal that they had a prisoner. Soon he heard an exclamation :—

“Why do you blind my eyes and bind my hands, and then lead me through these damp vaults, and over this rough path? I cannot proceed unless you give my limbs liberty and restore my sight.”

No answer was vouchsafed; but two of the bandits, one on each side, held him by the arm, and supported him as well as possible, till the prisoner stood before the chief. A lamp or two was now lighted, and when a little of the darkness was thus dispelled, the chieftain beheld his captive. The latter was a youth, apparently, of not more than seventeen years, attired in the costume of a British officer. His face was partly concealed from view by the bandage round his eyes, and his arms were so tightened to his sides by the straps that they were powerless. After the chieftain had surveyed him a moment, he said, somewhat kindly :—

“Who are you?”

“I will not deny my country nor my king,” replied

the prisoner, "but, did I call myself an American, my dress would belie my words."

"Oh, there ain't much now in dress," said the chief, kindly, "for whenever the Yankees fall in with a chest of clothes, they don't mind fighting the next battle in royal coats. But what brought you to this locality?"

"I bore despatches up the Hudson from Sir Henry, and having discharged my public duty, I have permission to give attention to my private matters, and I now seek the assistance of Claudie and his men. But, why am I thus bound and blinded? If it were to conceal the mystery of this labyrinth through which I have travelled, it has succeeded, for I could not recognize a tenth of its mazy windings. I am in much pain from this needless treatment, and trust, whoever you may be, that you will give me liberty of sight at least."

"I am Claudie," responded the chieftain.

"Then I am safe," quickly rejoined the prisoner, "for I can, I know, confide in you."

"Remove the bandage and release his arms," ordered the giant.

A shudder passed over the adventurer as he found himself a prisoner in this dread fastness—a feeling that was not unnoticed by the many eyes that watched him.

"You dislike these halls, I see," said Claudie, "and you regard the tenants with no more favour; but you may dismiss your fears if you speak honestly, for then we are your friends; if falsely, we are your executioners."

"On the honour which I prize beyond life, I have no treacherous intent toward you."

"Then let us hear your mission, that we may judge," replied Claudie, in a softer tone.

The youth gazed upon the men that surrounded him

and then upon the chieftain, who, perceiving that he thus silently objected to so large an audience, dismissed his followers. Not unwillingly, the bandits resumed their places by the fire to complete the pleasure of their cups.

"Now you may speak freely," said the chief. "What brought you here?"

"An affair of the heart—nothing else!" said the martial stripling, with downcast eyes and a blush upon his cheek.

"What! a love pilgrimage?" reiterated the astonished Claudie; "why, you must have mistaken the subterranean galleries of the Ramapo for the halls of Cupid! This must be some frolic of the merry garrison. Your brother officers, taking advantage of your youth, are indulging their humour at your expense."

"My visit was unknown to all others," said the youth. "I came in my own interest, solely."

"Boy," said Claudie, with sharpness, "there is either wit or treachery in your errand. Be plainer, if you wish to escape mortification, perhaps trouble."

The youth, assuming a boldness that he did not feel, said :—

"You are esteemed in the British Army as a fearless man. Sir Henry Clinton has no less confidence in your loyalty. Knowing that you stand thus high in the opinions of those of maturer judgment than my own, and that you had done good service to the royal cause, and being deeply enamoured with a lady in this district, I resolved to implore your aid in the prosecution of my suit, and am here to do so!"

"That's to the point," said the conciliated Claudie. "A British soldier may ever command a helping hand from

Claudie and his men, where it can be afforded without outrage to their own interests and their duty to Sir Henry, so that if you want free passage to this lady you shall have it. I will see that you are not molested on the road."

"I do not ask to be guided to her presence," replied the youth, "for I am not an accepted suitor! Therein lies my trouble."

"You surely will not ask me to plead your cause," rejoined Claudie, "for where your handsome face would be dismissed, the rough pleadings in your behalf of the Ranger of the Ramapo would be but little heeded."

"I did not think to ask such service of you," observed the prisoner, with a smile; "but I am annoyed to learn that she has preferred the suit of another, to whom she affects devotion—a Yankee officer."

"That lessens the chance of your success, if the rival is a gallant fellow," said Claudie.

"It is this rivalry that nerves me to what I contemplate," vociferated the youth, with an energy that astounded Claudie. "I would tear her false heart from her fair bosom, rather than my rival should receive her hand!"

"Boy!" exclaimed the chief, in reproof; "you do not think of murder to heal the wound in your heart?"

"No, no," interposed the youth, in haste, "not that," and a shudder passed through his frame, as if he revolted from such a horror, "only—only—abduction. To seize her—bear her away from his presence, and to place her under my own influence."

"Abduction is base service for honest soldiers to perform. My men are not schooled in it."

"Suppose this rival were an enemy of yours," he asked,

"would you forego this opportunity to revenge your wrongs as well as mine?"

"I might," responded Claudie, "if he were a worthy foe."

"One," continued the youth, regardless of his response, "who has hunted you up and down the country and through the forest, and who has offered a reward for your head as if you were a wolf. One who has, on one occasion, followed you to the very mouth of these caverns, who has slain some of your best men, and who only waits a fitting opportunity to resume the search."

The youth paused. He saw that he had disturbed the placid feelings of the chief. He perceived his brawny hand involuntarily travelling over the hilt of the dagger in his belt, and that his disinclination had disappeared before the stronger feeling of revenge.

"Who is this man?" exclaimed the brigand. "Let me hear his name, for as my enemies rise up they pass away, and I will see that this villain soon joins his confrères."

"If I reveal his name for purposes of my own, promise me that he shall not be injured by you or your men; but that his punishment, if taken, shall be wholly left to me. Fear not but that he will suffer more acutely than by death."

"I think I may with safety commit my vengeance to the merciless feelings of a jealous rival," said Claudie; "hence I promise."

"Know you Randolph Murray, then?" slowly asked the youth.

"Is it he?" exclaimed Claudie, dashing his hand with violence upon his knee. "By all the powers of earth, I've promised rashly, for his hand is crimsoned with my

brother's blood, and he would surely have fallen had he not moved off to Peekskill."

"But your word?" suggested the youth.

"Shall not be forfeited," replied the chief; "it will be cheering to behold his torture, as well as to shed his blood. But the girl—who is she?"

"One Pauline Woodfall," replied the youth.

"Is that the nymph who has lighted such a fire of frenzy in your young heart?" said the chief.

"I am resolved to force her from the arms of Randolph Murray," said the youth.

"No better time than while he is away," remarked the chief.

"But will you afford me your assistance?" asked the youth.

"The more heartily that I owe a debt of vengeance to old Woodfall," replied the chief. "He spirited this dragoon Captain away from my grasp, on his own horse."

"This night?" said the youth.

"To-night? So soon?" replied Claudie. "You're deliberate in your love; but a good soldier would not delay to darkness what could be as well performed by day. I know the ground, and have the plan already clearly formed. After it fails will be time to try the game at night. She must be decoyed by some device beyond the grounds and garden into the wood, where she can be easily seized. Will you perform that delicate task yourself, or will you permit one of my men the honour of encircling the maiden's waist? I think you're scarcely equal to the effort to raise her to and retain her on your horse?"

"I will submit all to your arrangements," said the youth, while a blush suffused his cheeks. "I would not

endanger success by a false jealousy of those who contribute to my happiness."

"Well said," replied Claudie; "never ask confidence where you cannot concede it." Uttering a peculiar signal, a tall man approached through the archway from the fire. "Flash," he continued, "in another hour take half-a-dozen men and repair to our rendezvous in Woodfall's coppice, and there await my coming."

The lieutenant departed, and then the huge chieftain, rising from his chair, invited his young guest to join him in some refreshment before they proceeded on their expedition.

CHAPTER VII.

IN DURANCE VILE.

RANDOLPH MURRAY had now been absent several weeks, but at the end of each he had forwarded by special messenger across those dreary plains letters to his beloved Pauline. He also enclosed separate notes for Mr. Woodfall, relating the military news and some anecdotes of the colt that he had in his charge, and how it lightened the labours of the ever-ready Malvern. The old gentleman received them with great pleasure, and learned to await their arrival with great eagerness. More than a week had passed since Randolph's last despatch; but he had prepared Pauline for a long interval, as he was ordered on some distant duty. On the tenth morning she rose sad and melancholy. The night had been sleepless, and the day was even more irksome than the darkness. There was a depression upon her mind that she could not dispel. Mr. Woodfall, perceiving her unsettled state, made every effort to divert her; but this kind attention gave her

additional pain, for it was evident that she had not been sufficiently careful to conceal her sorrow. In the afternoon she sought the solitude of the garden. There she had roamed with Randolph, and there she had first heard those words of love which chained her heart to his and made their destinies one.

Pauline had been walking in deep reverie for some time, when she was aroused from her thoughts by the sound of a strange voice. Looking upward, she beheld, standing upon a hill which flanked the garden fence, a gentleman in military costume. She was indignant that the privacy of her walk should thus be invaded, and was about to retire to the house, when the person moved along the hill in the direction she had taken, and when within hearing, said :—

“Lady, I fear that a misconception has been put upon my presence ; but I am guilty of neither impertinence nor curiosity in being here. Pause, I pray, and hear me, for I come from Captain Murray.”

Pauline, who was retreating more rapidly as the stranger spoke, stopped instantly at the sound of that magic name, and looked scrutinizingly upon the speaker, waiting his approach. Nearing her and raising his cap, he said :—

“Lady, my misjudged efforts to attract attention were nearly punished by defeat, which might have been a matter of lamentation to both yourself and him whom I strive to serve. I am the bearer of letters from Captain Murray.”

“Thanks, generous soldier,” replied the now joyous Pauline, “ letters from Captain Murray are pearls of price to us ; but we must receive you at the house. The path upon the hill from which you have descended leads to the

entrance-door. My father and I will meet you there, and will give you such a welcome as every friend of Randolph must command."

"I am constrained to decline your hospitality," rejoined the stranger. "You perceive that I am a British officer, and if detected within these lines my life will be forfeited. But my pledge to Captain Murray has been redeemed."

"Is Randolph, then, a prisoner in your camp?" exclaimed Pauline, in alarm.

"No, no," replied the stranger, hurriedly, "he is not our prisoner; but I cannot remain to relate how I am become his courier."

"I am grateful for his safety," replied Pauline, with clasped and uplifted hands; then advancing toward the messenger, she continued: "if you decline our entertainment, I must receive your letters in whatever manner you may please, although I would rather that they should be handed to me openly at the door, than clandestinely by the garden fence."

"Lady, you are spared the latter painful ordeal," replied the stranger, with some sarcasm, "for your letters are deposited beneath a chair in the upland wood beyond the garden, where, if I remember rightly, you met Captain Murray at an early period of your acquaintance."

"Impossible," exclaimed the agitated Pauline; "you cannot have been so gratuitously cruel. The place is as unsafe as the ravine of the Ramapo, and almost the last promise I made to Randolph before we parted was, never to venture near that fearful wood."

"And almost the last words he said to me at parting," said the stranger, "were to place there the letters and then warn you of it. I have done so at the hazard of my life.

Seek them or reject them, as you please. See, yonder is a horseman ; he rides this way. Should he spy me, you may have the opportunity of seeing your Randolph's messenger suspended from a tree within view of your own garden. Farewell, fair lady, I have discharged my duty, though you scruple to do yours."

The stranger then disappeared in a hollow in the hill, and the horseman, proceeding in a different direction, was seen no more. So sudden and strange had been the appearance and the exit of this strange messenger, that Pauline paused to consider whether it were a vision of her troubled mind, or whether the scene had positively occurred. When she was convinced that all was real, then came the agonizing reflection of the deposit of the letters, and by what means they were to be obtained by her.

"Oh, Randolph," exclaimed the despairing girl, "why are those dear letters placed thus cruelly on forbidden ground, to decoy me from my duty to my pledge? You could not believe that I could from morn till night sit viewing the spot where so much solace to my poor heart lies hidden and not rescue them? Ah, now I see more clearly, Randolph ; it is but a merry jest of yours to place me in a strait of circumstances, so that, act as I may, I am open to your pardonable reproach ! If I decide to abandon the letter to its fate, you will then taunt me with indifference and neglect. If I boldly walk to this dreaded goal and seize my letter, then you will upbraid me for my disobedience. But you will chide me kindly, Randolph ; and will hereafter smile at the difficulty I have in making an election. Yet, I must have the letters. The feelings of my heart demand it—it is needful to my life. There is no danger in the little

journey. I am certain Randolph will forgive me my seeming rashness—so I will proceed at once.”

Pauline then passed through the garden and along the grounds, until she reached the outer edge of the wood. She had some hundreds of yards yet to ascend before she could attain the spot where the letters were deposited, and her courage seemed to fail. She gazed towards the wood. All was silent—not a leaf was stirring, and yet she could not advance. She looked back in the direction of the house; the distance seemed nothing—all promised security, and she would not retreat without her prize.

“There is something in my breast that premonishes me of coming danger,” said Pauline, as she stood thus between the forbidden wood and her dear home, “but I know that it is but some vagrant feeling of timidity common to my sex. The promised bride of the dauntless Randolph Murray must not be defeated in her object by this base hesitation. I will not be the creature of cowardly impulse.”

Then the devoted girl pressed forward to the wood. The distance was soon overcome, the old chair came in view, and beneath reposed the prize for which she had so valiantly contended. She grasped it in her hand. She pressed it to her heart and to her lips. It seemed to her precious beyond all previous missives of that dear hand.

“I feel,” exclaimed the exulting Pauline, as she pressed the letter closer to her bosom, like one who, having obtained a mighty victory, removes the treasure to examine it in an hour of greater privacy. I hold the fruits of victory in my hand, dear Randolph, and I will hasten home and enjoy them as a conqueror.”

These words of triumph had scarcely left her lips when her waist was encircled by the arm of a powerful man.

Despite her struggles and her screams of terror, she was borne further into the labyrinths of the fatal wood, where she fainted upon the shoulder of her captor.

"To horse, to horse, brave boy!" exclaimed the abductor, "you came well upon the scene. Be careful of your captive, and dash forward to the cave with all your speed. The gaps and passes on your road are well held by my pickets, so that you will meet with no annoyance. Hold firmly to your charge, and deliver her the instant you reach the cave to our Dame Hogget. Captain Henry, will you ride with me, or with the trooper who bears your lady?"

"I think that my duty leaves me no alternative," replied the young Captain to Claudie, who addressed him, he being no other than the young officer who had lured the eager Pauline to the wood.

Forward they rode at a rapid pace. The horseman who bore the senseless Pauline in his arms led the way, followed closely by Henry, while Claudie brought up the rear. The road was admirably guarded, sentinels being placed at all the gaps and defiles to secure a safe retreat. In a short time the whole troop reached the recesses of the Ramapo. Obedient to his trust, the trooper delivered his still unconscious charge into the arms of Hogget, who had been apprised by the chief that such a novelty would reach the retreat during the day.

This Hogget was the only female in the cavern. She was upwards of fifty years of age, but possessed the active energy of thirty. She was plain even to unsightliness—her face was very small, her nose of masculine prominence; her cheek-bones were lofty, and her eyes diminutive and deeply sunken beneath her projecting brows. This peculiar woman had long sojourned in this

savage and notorious region. She loved a subsoil life, and preferred the damp, dark caverns of the Ramapo to a dwelling on its surface. Yet she had one of the kindest hearts in nature, and her winning manners and exhaustless resources in administering solace were so irresistible that none despaired beneath her treatment.

This was the woman to whom the care of Pauline was committed, and well was it that the helpless maid was placed under such guardianship as could protect her from the wild, lawless occupants of her prison. But Hogget was devoted to the brigand chief. She believed him to be a hero, acting well his allotted part in the great struggle to repress treason to the king. Thus, when she received in her arms the senseless Pauline, she felt that there was some good reason for this seeming violence, even though cruel to the fair sufferer herself. She therefore conveyed Pauline to a small chamber or grotto, which was lighted by a lamp and blazing fire, and placing her upon the bed, all prepared, resorted to those remedies of her simple pharmacy that soon afforded evidences of reanimation, little thinking, in her busy love, of the horror of approaching consciousness.

While the motherly dame was exerting herself to solace her charge, Claudie and the young officer sat in privacy beside a fire in one of the cells in this roomy homestead. The brigand was enjoying his evening pipe, and in a hollow in the rock behind him was placed a cask of liquor, from which, occasionally, he sipped. The British Captain, however, indulged in neither; he seemed to eschew the luxuries of a cavern residence, in opposition to the persuasion of his host.

"I wish you would smoke or take a cup of Hollands," remarked Claudie "for although you may avoid these

habits when on garrison duty, you will yield at least to the pipe when ordered to camp life. But I see that you are impatient at this continued importunity, and, therefore, I will change the subject of our conversation to one nearer to your heart. What is the next step in reference to this stolen beauty?"

"What step would you suggest?" replied Henry.

"I did not anticipate such a question," remarked Claudie; "but there is no very great difficulty in the answer—"

"My object is to ascertain if you and I concur on such a subject," interposed Henry.

"Then I propose marriage," said the chief. "If you love the girl as well as the man with whose name we baited the trap into which she fell, you will of course take the prize to yourself."

"Marriage!" exclaimed the youth, "I had not thought of that."

"Is it distasteful to you, now that you have the bird within your net?" demanded Claudie, impatiently.

"No, no," exclaimed Henry, his really beautiful face now crimsoned with the deepest hue of shame; "but a clergyman, a church, the preparations, the ceremony. Impossible!"

"Not so impossible as you think, my friend, if your heart be in the right place," said Claudie, ejecting heavy clouds of smoke from his lips. "We have all the materials necessary for the whole performance. In the first place, we have a chamber dedicated as a chapel, used for no other purpose than the burial of our dead, it is true,—for marriage is forbidden in our fraternity. I wish we had the same constraint on death. Then one of our gallant brethren once wore the cassock in a foreign land.

He still has his ritual, and will perform the service with the solemnity of the fattest priest in Christendom."

The young officer had listened to this proposal with agitation. His face was wholly concealed between his hands, and the chief relapsed into silence. A few moments passed, when, as if he would object to the summary forms thought sufficient by the chief, Henry said, in a voice that disclosed the intensity of his feelings :—

"But how is the lady to be induced to accept me? I am wholly unequal to the task of forcing her."

"That is a matter certainly usually undertaken by the suitor," replied the chief; "but as you appear to have no taste for such a privilege, even that I will provide for. Hogget shall plead your cause. I will instruct her in a manner that her very soul shall be enlisted in our success, and then, you may be assured that she will not be defeated. She is a woman of remarkable powers; but has no knowledge that she possesses them. In many things she rules me against my will; and although I often resolve that this shall no longer be, when she appears her influence is irresistible. It is so with this wild flock of mine; she is more their chief than I. Perhaps you had better retire for a few minutes, for I have summoned Hogget by a signal only known among us. Be near, however, that you may meet her, and say to her some words of courtesy or kindness, and let her judge whether the intended bridegroom is not well worthy of the bride."

The young man rushed from the place as Hogget entered. What passed at the interview he did not learn; but, obedient to the desire of Claudie, he intercepted the female as she left the chief, and, placing his hand upon her shoulder, said :—

"Good Hogget, do your best offices for me with that sweet lady. Let her see the imprudence of remaining here a day without some better protection than her own innocence. That is but a sorry weapon in a secret cavern, amid a band of wild, reckless men. It ought to seem to her a question admitting of but one solution."

Hogget caught the hand of Henry and pressed it between hers, saying :—

"The lady is in a refreshing sleep ; but when she awakes, I'll fulfil the captain's directions. 'Tis quite as you say, and no doubt this sweet young girl will think so, when she comes to remember her position. She talks of one Randolph, who, I know, is the captain's enemy and seeks his life. She ought to forget one who is capable of such villany."

The remarkable Hogget triumphed. She actually won the consent of Pauline to be the wife of Captain Henry on two conditions : that she should not meet him except at the altar in the chapel ; and that she should not meet him after, so long as she remained in the cave.

"What think you of these conditions ?" asked Claudie of the young man, as they again sat in the same cell, two days after.

"I subscribe to them," replied the Briton, evidently pleased.

"With a readiness unworthy of a bridegroom," rejoined the chief.

"I have my revenge on Murray."

"Has, then, your love for the girl thus settled into hatred for the man ?" asked Claudie. "It is I who thirst for revenge."

"Hear me, bold Ranger of the Ramapo," interposed Captain Henry, dexterously using a title of which it was

the chieftain's weakness to be proud. "It is far from me to provoke one who has so much befriended me; but I implore you to let Randolph Murray be dealt with only by myself, and your revenge, however deep it be, will be amply gratified. Soon I shall take another step in my vengeance on this fierce trooper; let me pursue him until he or I may fall."

Claudie was reconciled.

At length the hour arrived for the meeting in the chapel. Steps were heard in the narrow vestibule that conducted to the place, and soon appeared in the doorway Pauline, leaning on the arm of Hogget. She was very beautiful, but pallid as a ghost. There was firmness in her eye, but feebleness in her frame, and she must have fallen to the floor had not Hogget supported her. A chill of repulsion rushed through the veins even of those wild men who lined the rocky walls, and all believed that the funeral service would quickly follow that of marriage. Captain Henry, with some feeling, advanced to take her hand: but she waved him from her with pride and indignation, and pointed to the table behind which stood the spurious priest. Then, casting her eyes upon the hard features of those who had assembled to witness her execution, she signed to Hogget to lead her where the bridegroom awaited the sacrifice, and the ceremony commenced. It was soon concluded; then her firmness yielded to the feelings of her heart. She fell upon her knees, and with uplifted and clasped hands, exclaimed:—

"Oh, Randolph, Randolph! this hateful perjury is for thy honour as well as mine. I thus make the lesser sacrifice to avoid the greater evil, that I may enter the unseen world to which I am bound as unsullied as when I pledged you my heart."

She would have fallen upon the floor had not Hogget, who had not left her side for a moment, raised her in her arms to bear her from the chapel. The only sound that for some moments disturbed the silence was the echo of her receding footsteps.

The silent crowd then dispersed. There was neither marriage feast nor marriage congratulations. The stolen bride was reconducted to her prison, and the heartless bridegroom withdrew from the society of those rugged villains, who evidently did not approve of such proceedings as they had just witnessed.

"I almost wish," said Claudie, when he and Henry returned to their cell, "that we had been less harsh with that poor girl."

"What!" exclaimed the young husband, "with that eternal cry of 'Randolph' in her throat?"

"Who, I fear, is so deeply rooted in her heart that there is no room for *you*," observed the chief.

"I care not, personally, for her love," was the reply to this taunt; "but I do desire to force Randolph Murray from her thoughts."

They were interrupted, however, by the appearance of Hogget, to announce the dangerous state of Pauline. Under this nurse's instructions Henry quitted the cavern to procure such medical comforts as were required in her simple but efficient treatment.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIDNIGHT VISIT TO PAULUS' HOOK.

CAPTAIN MURRAY crossed the Hudson without accident, and reached the army at Peekskill in time to swell its volume before the arrival of the British. Cap-

tain Horton, however, had outstripped him in the chase, having arrived the day before; but the immediate and severe cavalry duties of Randolph forbade the meeting of these friends. Twelve hours after Murray's advent the British host appeared. Their numerous vessels covered the waters of the Hudson, and it was now evident that their force was more formidable than was anticipated.

The untiring Washington, with his usual caution, watched his enemy unceasingly. He sent scouting parties to every practicable landing-place, to guard against any effort at a flank movement—a species of strategy rarely omitted when Sir Henry Clinton was on the war-path. On this occasion, however, the British commandant was minutely watched, that this standing feature in his tactics might be defeated. He was compelled to advance boldly to the front, and anchor before Peekskill. There was no city to besiege; Peekskill was then but a puny village; and the artillery of Washington was of too small calibre to oppose the enemy's landing. The British soldiery were poured from the vessels to the banks in safety. Washington retired as the enemy formed, and advanced until he reached the surrounding heights, where he gave evidence that he would accept the gage of battle; but the sun went down upon the adverse armies while the sword was in the scabbard, the British contenting themselves with the occupation of the lower range of hills and the flats.

The night, however, was not devoid of martial incident. In that short period of hazy beauty between the setting of the sun and darkness, the vigilant Randolph had observed a detachment of British infantry making its stealthy way toward a pass in the hills, thought to be too distant to need guarding. He saw in an instant the

danger, for he had no doubt that other troops would follow this vanguard in the greater obscurity of night. He despatched a messenger to head-quarters, and with fearless energy prepared to attack this force with the few men at his disposal. He perceived in this movement a repetition of the successful strategy at the battles of Long Island and the Brandywine, and he knew that if he fell in the attack, the report of firearms in the engagement would announce the detection of the scheme, and thus defeat its object. The country was unfavourable for horse; but Randolph was not discouraged. He procured a trusty guide, and started to intercept the stealthy foe. By an oblique and hasty march he hoped to reach a point in the narrow road ahead of the enemy, and thus dispose his men for their reception; but he was delayed by the difficulties of night travel, and the belligerents arrived at the spot at the same moment. Randolph saw that his plan of surprise was frustrated, and, disdaining to retreat with an undrawn sword, he gave the word to charge, and dashed upon the enemy with an impetuosity that produced slaughter and confusion. But the British had not entrusted this important enterprise to weak hands. The enemy had a leader as gallant as himself, who soon detected the inferiority of the assailing force, rallied his broken men, and conducted his dispositions with such skill and energy, that Murray, in spite of the havoc of his sabres, found himself nearly surrounded by superior numbers. Then was the intrepid nature of this unconquerable spirit fully displayed. He smiled upon the artful manœuvre of his rival, as he gazed upon the forest of muskets in his rear. Danger was his element.

"Soldiers," he cried, at the moment when the British thought he was preparing to yield, "those who have not

the courage and strength of lions would perish on the field ; but you have these qualities, and will follow me. Our road lies through those bayonets, where I will lead ! ”

He described with his sword the fatal route, and, as a cheer of exultation greeted his ear, he gave rein to the fearless Malvern, and dashed forward to the charge, followed by his devoted men. The ranks of the enemy, veterans though they were, could not withstand the impetuosity of these undaunted horsemen. The British shrunk before them, and Randolph thus gained for his valorous troop a place of safety. In the meantime, without commotion in the camp, a company of infantry was despatched to support the attack of Randolph, and, if possible, to capture the adventurous detachment of the enemy. This was led by Horton, who, impelled by both his courage and the warmth of friendship, urged his men forward at their greatest speed ; but he arrived only in time to be the first to congratulate his friend upon his bold deliverance ; for the English leader, finding that his secret movement was disclosed, moved off in close retreat. The friends perceived that it was fruitless to follow him. This was the only incident of life and death in the long-planned invasion of the shores of Peekskill, for, on the dawn of the following morning, instead of advancing upon the Americans, as was anticipated, the foe, after destroying the village and all the property in their power, returned to their ships, and floated down the river upon the ebbing tide.

The enemy gone, there was no impediment to the reunion of friends, and Randolph and Alfred met daily at each other's quarters. The former disclosed his relations to Pauline, while the latter, no less candid, avowed his affection for the erratic Amy Ward, expressing his fears

that she regarded him with no other feeling than that of gratitude.

"And is not gratitude premonitory of a yet deeper, holier passion, if it is permitted to develop?" demanded Randolph.

"Perhaps it is," replied Alfred, "but the trifling service I have rendered places me in a delicate relation to Miss Ward. I cannot presume to press my suit because of my service."

"You have no need to press your suit. It will do its own work. Amy Ward's is a fiery nature, but controlled by letting it have its own way. Only be sure to show your appreciation of her, and you will some day be surprised by an evidence of her gratitude in the shape of a love declaration to you." Murray talked as if he had made a close study of the subject.

The two friends became mutually happier, knowing that each understood the other fully.

As it was not probable that any further attempt would be repeated by the British in this locality, it was thought that General Washington would again disperse the army in fragments upon the banks of the Hudson, where they might more readily be supplied with necessities, and yet rapidly concentrate as at Peekskill. Murray and Horton not only remembered their former agreeable vicinity to each other, but both were attracted to the spot they had so lately quitted by other endearments. They anxiously desired to reoccupy their old encampments, and Randolph had determined to ask of his superior if his military arrangements would admit of this indulgence, when a secret enterprise was suggested to him, in which he resolved to embark—the surprise of Paulus' Hook.

The midnight capture of Stony Point, by General Wayne, was ringing in the soldiers' ears, and fitted them for other desperate undertakings, when intelligence was received of the insecure manner in which this fortress was guarded by the English. The destruction of Stony Point was a fruitless lesson to these idle warders, who, believing themselves beyond an enemy's sword, yielded to the ease instead of maintaining the watchfulness of garrison life. As soon as this incaution became known, an assault was resolved upon, not with any desire to occupy the fortress, for that was impossible; but merely to exhibit another evidence of the daring character of the American soldier as he struggled for the right of nationality. Randolph communicated to Alfred his resolution, who insisted upon being received as a volunteer. This request could not be denied. Good men were required for this desperate service, and Randolph's experience supplied him with no knowledge of a better one than his friend.

The day of the departure of this expedition was yet unnamed, when Randolph, fearing exaggerated reports might possibly reach Pauline, sat down to advise her of his secret enterprise, and to caution her against surprise at any momentary suspension of his messages to her. We may quote from his epistle:—

“I must not omit to tell you, sweet Pauline, that the other day I was complimented in words of high encomium by General Washington. I should have been prouder of this honour had I merited the distinction. He praised me for my daring in an attack, when in a subsequent cross-examination of myself, I had admitted—to myself—that I had acted with imprudence. Then he spoke admiringly of my coolness and resource in the moment of

great peril, while my incitement to desperate action in reality was dread of a British prison. I received these marks of his approbation with uncovered head and modest mien; but I concealed the motives that I have confessed to you; though I trust you will not use this candour to my prejudice!

"The General judged me from results; I convicted myself on a knowledge of motives that he could not fathom; I ungenerously declined to afford him my assistance, and the consequence is that I am preferred to a duty of great trust. When I return from that, I shall presume still further on his kindness, and petition to be again allowed to return to my old camp, within a charming ride of what I most love on earth.

"I hope to obtain the same privilege for Horton and his valiant men. He, like myself, is enthusiastic in reference to the Ramapo valley; but apart from the hills, the valleys, and the trees, he has a *penchant* for something still more beautiful that is hidden there; but, as if the fowler gave warning to his victim he might never catch his bird, I must not be less mysterious to you.—Ever yours,

"RANDOLPH."

This Randolph despatched by his trusty messenger, and then, with a gaiety he had not experienced for many days, he rallied Alfred upon the subject so near his heart, spoke with confidence of his ability to procure a reinstatement in their old camp-grounds, when, if he feared to venture upon a wiser plan, he might employ Old Elsie to convert, by her enchantments, the gratitude of Amy into love.

It was now the middle of August, and it was resolved that the attack on Paulus' Hook should be made on the night of the 12th. Three hundred picked men were

detailed for this daring enterprise, among whom was the troop of Randolph's dragoons. The utmost secrecy and discrimination were used in the preparations, that the movement might be withheld from the knowledge of the enemy; while, the better to cover the departure of the men with greater plausibility, it was made known that they were mustered for service on a foraging excursion, a circumstance of frequent occurrence. The men were conveyed to a certain point, and thence they were to march to Paulus' Hook. The road was between the Hudson and the Hackensack rivers, upon a belt of wooded heights, and so rugged and difficult that they moved with great labour. It was a privilege to behold these gallant people struggling forward in the night. The officers watched them attentively. They withheld every word of cheer or encouragement, desirous to leave them to their own innate courage. This did not fail. Although the path was scarcely practicable and caused much delay, every obstacle was surmounted.

Instead, however, of being midnight when they reached the Hook, the conjectured hour of their arrival, it was three in the morning; but they were not dismayed. They would not abandon their well-planned scheme because it was three hours nearer to the rising of the sun than they had hoped. They marched boldly forward. All circumstances, however, were not unpropitious. A party had quitted the Hook the previous day on a foraging excursion, and the listless sentinels, too long accustomed to a laxity of discipline, imagining that the armed men whom they sleepily regarded were their returning companions, admitted them without challenge, so that, before the slumbering garrison was aroused, Randolph and his brave supporters were in possession of the fortress. The com-

mandant leaped from his bed of slumber, and, more brave than vigilant, collected about sixty of his astonished men and threw himself into a block-house, and there commenced a harmless fire. Randolph made no attempt to dislodge them. His *coup de main* was crowned with triumph, and he would not waste the precious hours of victory in profitless contention for this section of a conquest that he intended to abandon soon after sunrise. But, as an evidence of his daring prowess, he seized one hundred and fifty of the garrison, destroyed the guns of this isolated stronghold, then setting fire to all the stores and property he could not bear away with his prisoners, he commenced his retreat. It was now daylight, and the insignificance of the force with which he had effected this surprise could no longer be concealed. There was, therefore, great peril in this backward movement; but this in a measure had been foreseen, and, to meet every possible contingency, boats had been ordered to a place known as Dow's Ferry, in order that any pursuit might be defeated by a recourse to the river. Hither Randolph marched his men; but when these gallant warriors reached the place, not a boat was in attendance! The disappointment was great, but was manfully endured. The danger was now increased, for there was no alternative but to retrace the narrow neck which conducted to the ferry, at the imminent risk of encountering the foraging party of the enemy, which had not then returned to Paulus' Hook. There was another cause of alarm, more distant possibly, but no less certain. The flames of the burning fortress would act as a beacon to the garrisons and ships below, which would not fail to send them immediate relief. Still the courage of the hour was sustained by the victories of the past. The men were proud

of their commander, and he could estimate the valour of his soldiers, so that in this pleasing confidence both marched on in the cheering conviction that he was equal to the difficulties in his path. At this crisis, however, relief appeared, welcome as a well of water in the arid desert. A worthy brother officer, knowing the difficulties of the expedition, assembled what men he could, and marched so as to cover their retreat. This kindly foresight enabled the now jaded soldiers to move less rapidly, and to reach their quarters in safety. The tidings of the assault soon spread. The country was electrified at the gallantry of its soldiery. It was said that ancient deeds of arms were emulated in such exploits, and this affair at Paulus' Hook was ranked by many with the achievement of Wayne at Stony Point a few weeks earlier. Be this as it may, it is one of those incidents which, without political consequence, is highly illustrative of the capabilities of a people when war develops its energies, and cannot be read in these exciting times without kindling a spirit of emulation and devotion to country, which was the germ of victory in that great struggle.

CHAPTER IX.

GRATITUDE NOT LOVE.

As soon as the excitement of this bold adventure at Paulus' Hook had passed away, Randolph began to feel increased anxiety to revisit Pauline, and, as a period of inaction was likely to ensue, he determined to solicit that indulgence alluded to in his last letter to Pauline. He, therefore, promptly wrote to the General, asking if, in the approaching quartering of troops, it was compatible with the service and not adverse to his wishes that both

himself and Captain Horton could be permitted to occupy the camps from which they had so recently been withdrawn. He intimated that the district was infested by cowboys and a half military organization, ready for every species of villany which resulted in profit to themselves, and that, in his opinion, the inhabitants required the protection of a military force when such guardianship could be afforded without injury to the national cause. A reply reached him with military promptness, which acknowledged an obligation for his information, and contained an assurance that Captain Horton should at once be ordered to his former encampment; but as the urgency of the service still required a few officers well-known to fame to remain for a time in the more immediate vicinity of head-quarters, it was necessary that his own removal should be deferred until a few weeks later.

This was very flattering to the soldier, but sadly unappreciated by the lover. His "ruling passion," now, was love, not fame, and it seemed harsh that he should be constrained to suffer for a dignity of character he did not care to estimate. Thus the lively hope of so quickly being restored to the society of Pauline was again condemned to slumber in the heart whence it had been prematurely summoned. As Randolph sat brooding over his misfortunes, Captain Horton entered his tent. There was a joyous smile upon his face, but it vanished as he perceived the mortification expressed on the visage of his friend.

"Ah, Alfred," said Randolph, affecting an ease of manner, "I learn from your sparkling eyes intelligence that it is needless for your tongue to speak. You are ordered to Orange County?"

"And you, my worthy Randolph?" said Alfred, interrogatively.

"Oh," replied Randolph, handing his friend the letter he had just received, "I am considered by my superior officers to be a man of such distinction as to be retained here in wretchedness a few weeks longer. If they really wish to do me honour, they should render it less equivocally."

"You speak in the bitterness of a painful moment, Randolph," said Alfred, resting his hand familiarly upon his friend's shoulder; "on an hour's reflection, you will do more justice to these ingenuous men. Their conduct must not be the less esteemed because it is irreconcilable with ardent desires which they know not to exist; and even if they did, a week or two of delay will be gladly acceded to by the expectant Pauline, to meet you with such credentials in your hands."

"I will strive to think with you, Alfred," said the disappointed dragoon officer; "but this continued absence, especially unemployed, is difficult to endure. Yet there is still one cheering circumstance—you will now be able to prosecute your suit. Amy Ward knows how to value a true soldier and a worthy man; she will not fail to accept the flattering distinction of your choice."

"I wish my heart was refreshed with the same confidence," was the response; "but its fears are in the van, and a sad troop of doubts, surmises, and mistrusts bring up the rear."

"Banish them all, my friend," exclaimed Randolph with energy; "your heart should be sustained by a worthier company than the conscripts you have named. He who could, like yourself, enter Paulus' Hook with unshrinking nerve, ought not to fear to approach a woman's heart!"

The two friends passed that evening together. Randolph charged Alfred with a lengthy epistle for his beloved Pauline, humorously stating that he, like men generally who had suddenly risen to eminence, had been compelled to subdue his ardent social feelings to the expedencies of State, and thus sent Captain Horton as ambassador before him to announce his advent; that he should follow when an officer of equal qualifications could be chosen to perform his duties, which consisted chiefly in a daily ride between Peekskill and head-quarters—"a measured distance of four miles out and back."

The next morning Horton commenced his march toward the Ramapo, and on the evening of the following day he reached his head-quarters. A quietude reigned over the spot congenial to his feelings; he felt more happy and more hopeful, as if inspiration was in the very air. The subsequent day was occupied in duties incumbent upon an officer; but, these discharged, he resolved that his earliest visit should be to the house of Squire Ward.

Accordingly, performing his toilet with unusual care, he mounted his horse, and directed his way toward the Ward homestead. It was a fine September morning; the sun was shining brightly, chasing with its fiery beams the vapours from valley and mountain. It was a wild, beautiful, and peaceful scene; and, as the wisest are apt to court some cheering omen as a great event approaches, so Alfred Horton accepted this smile of nature as flattering to his mission. He did not urge his horse; but enjoyed the solitude, at a slow pace, doubtless, like a conceited lover, drilling himself in lessons of elocution for the approaching interview—as if such a heart as Amy Ward's was to be stormed

and captured by words ! In the midst of his reveries he suddenly espied a horseman crossing the country not very distant in his front. The rider evidently was a young person. He rode a good horse, but, what was most astonishing, he wore the undress of a British officer ! Alfred, like a cautious soldier, drew rein, and scanned as much of the country as was unhidden by brush and wood, impressed with the belief that an unsupported enemy would not venture in these parts ; but nothing met his eye.

The resolution of the captain was soon taken. He determined to capture the officer, and, with this intention, he moved forward at a brisker pace, concealing himself and horse as well as possible beneath the foliage of the surrounding trees. He thus approached almost within pistol-shot of the adventurous Briton ere he was perceived. The horseman then, becoming alarmed, put spurs to his spirited horse, and dashed forward at its utmost speed. Alfred, though annoyed, was not defeated. He was on the stranger's trail in an instant, and a most exciting chase commenced. Both had good horses ; both rode well ; but the flying Briton was by far the lighter weight, and to a spectator this would have seemed the winning feature of the race. The pace became terrific. The stranger leaning forward almost upon his fleet horse's neck, used neither heel or whip. Alfred was less forbearing. He kept his spurs close to his courser's sides. Still he could not gain an inch. That cool, effortless stranger maintained his distance, and yet seemed to reserve his horse for greater speed. Alfred became enraged at being thus quietly defied by a mere stripling, and, grasping a pistol from his holster, shouted :—

"Halt ! or I will fire."

The wind, which blew freshly at their backs, wafted this message to the flying man ; but neither by word, by gesture, nor by increased speed, did he acknowledge it. The fiercer passions of the Continental soldier were now being aroused, and he again shouted :—

"Death or surrender ! Unless you rein up within a minute, I will fire !"

Still the Briton was heedless of the threat. It could not be that he courted death, in making this desperate struggle for life. It was plain, then, that there was some good reason for his composure. Alfred, permitting the allotted minute to pass, fired.

"That will overtake you !" he exclaimed.

But he was wrong. The British saddle was still filled, and the gallant steed did not relax his pace. The discomfited soldier then saw on what the fugitive had depended—that he was out of range. Though chagrined at this incident, he held boldly to the chase. The Briton gained a wood ; but, when Captain Horton reached it, he found that this cover afforded no advantage, for but a single avenue led through it, down which both galloped, until they emerged upon the Ramapo.

"Ah ! I see his object," thought the pursuer ; "he is flying to the cowboys, and I trust will uncover some of their secret haunts. The chase may yet end in victory."

He had scarcely uttered this hope when the stranger, turning his horse sharply down a deep, narrow ravine, dashed on with undiminished speed, leaving the Ramapo in his rear. Alfred followed at the same reckless pace, until another angle brought them in full view of the gorge, at the entrance to Old Elsie's abode. But on, on, pursued and pursuer fled, when another turn brought

them upon the road to Mr. Ward's house. Thoughts of Amy revived in his mind, and the singular coincidence that, in this wild chase, he should be guided to her very door-step, was interpreted most encouragingly.

"We shall have him now!" thought the Captain exultingly, "but he will be Amy's captive, for this road conducts directly to the house, where Mr. Ward has ever three or four stout fellows, who will not permit an English uniform to escape through their hands."

But another surprise! The stranger put his horse at a fence, cleared it, dashed through the orchard it enclosed, leaped out of it as readily as he had passed in, and disappeared from view! Alfred attempted to follow; but his horse refused the leap, and he rode forward to the house, there to encounter Mr. Ward, who received him most heartily. On being hastily informed of the circumstance that had just occurred, he directed the most diligent search to be made; but all to no purpose; neither horse nor rider had been seen!

The simple kindness of the Wards, however, lessened the burden of his chagrin. Amy soon appeared. She met Alfred with a smile, the sweetest he had seen lighten a human face, as it seemed to him.

"Welcome, welcome, Captain Horton!" she exclaimed. "I could not anticipate such joy as this. We have heard of your fame, and were fearful that that would give you a distaste for such a poor, dull locality as ours; but I suppose you are only upon a flying visit, and we are highly flattered that you should be so thoughtful as to call on us."

"Oh, but I am not the bird of passage that you suppose," replied Alfred, "for I am stationed with my regiment beyond the—the—"

"The gorge, Captain Horton," interposed Amy. "You

hesitate to name that spot, fearing to revive in my heart feelings of a painful nature. It does so ; nevertheless it can never be forgotten, and this brings me to a subject on which I was too sick to speak when we parted. It is that of the death from which you rescued me."

"Pardon me," interposed Alfred ; "the subject must be painful to you ; pray, then, do not mention it."

"It must be as you will," replied Amy ; "but the gratitude I owe to you will ever be the ruling sentiment of my heart."

This expression, pronounced with pathos, was followed by silence. Alfred was much affected ; and, had he not been restrained by the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Ward, might have been moved to give utterance to his emotions. At length Amy broke the spell, by saying :—

"I trust you intend to remain the day with us?"

"I promised myself that pleasure," replied Alfred.

"Then we are honoured," said Amy ; "and, as a preliminary step to your entertainment, perhaps you will accompany me to the orchard, where several of our people are gathering fruit."

The captive Captain of course consented, and thither they repaired. This was the place into which the fugitive had leaped and secured his retreat. Horton was examining the spot of the passage, when Amy, who had been issuing a few directions in reference to certain fruits, joined him.

"I was examining the fence," said Alfred, as if in explanation of his minute observations ; "I saw it leaped to-day by a horseman, and am not now astonished that my horse refused to follow. I think he acted with far more sagacity than his rider. You are not aware of my adventure?"

Alfred then related the circumstance of his morning ride, which ended in the leap into the orchard. Amy listened with attention, and seriously observed :—

“ And if you had shot that young man, who seems to have been guilty of no greater offence than the wearing of an English coat—which, perhaps, in the present dearth of broadcloth, is adopted by more American officers than he—would you have justified the act ? ”

“ If I had shot him, I should repent it now,” replied Alfred. “ The pistol was fired in the exasperation of the moment. I believe, however, that he is an Englishman, for he first made for the Ramapo, in the hope no doubt of finding succour there ; but, being disappointed, he dashed down the ravine to the gorge, then out by the road up to this spot, as if he perfectly knew every inch of the way. None but an enemy who had purposely studied the route could have passed over the ground so safely.”

“ Do you intend to adopt any measures for the detection of this reputed officer ? ” asked the lady.

“ I scarcely know,” said Alfred ; “ I think I must patrol these parts, and endeavour to penetrate into some of the hiding-places of these cowboys, with whom I have little doubt he is in league ; if, indeed, he be not some emissary of Clinton, prowling around here for no good purpose.”

The subject was then dismissed. Captain Horton was in ecstasies. Never before had he seen so much of Miss Ward, and the lady's association served to fan the flame in his bosom. He was flattered and encouraged, too, by her kind attention, which gave such buoyancy to his hopes that, as evening approached, he sought an opportunity to disclose the real object of his visit. This was not difficult, for Amy walked and conversed with him with the unreserved confidence of a sister, so that when they had

strolled, after dinner, to the bottom of the garden, where stood a rude summer-house, roofed with the climbing woodbine, they entered and sat down to enjoy the fragrance.

"This is delicious!" said Alfred, in rapture; "you have bestowed great taste and judgment in the management of these gardens." His thoughts were not upon the garden, though he spoke of it. The hour of departure was approaching; the crisis of his fate was near. A word might plunge him in despair, or raise him to the heaven of acceptance. He trembled at the power of woman over the destinies of man.

"If what I now feel be the sufferings of doubt," he thought, "what must be the torments of rejection?"

The disturbed state of his mind began to display itself upon his face. There was a visible uneasiness upon the part of Amy, who at once suggested a return to the house. Alfred could no longer restrain the passion of his heart. He commenced:—

"I have a few words to say before we separate, Miss Ward."

Amy became greatly agitated, but did not attempt to end the interview, as if determined to await the sequel.

"My return to my present camp," continued Alfred, "has been permitted at my own desire. I had but one object—a powerful one; and I quitted my tent this morning firmly resolved upon its prosecution. The avowal of my love for you must be delayed no longer. I cannot return with the burden of its unavowed strength on my mind, although without your acceptance of it I shall be oppressed by despair when I seek relief. I confess that I love you truly, and I ask your love in return."

"You are more than worthy of it! You have all it is in my power to give!" cried Amy, while her face was

concealed by her hands, from which copious tears of agony were falling. "I owe you everything—alas that I can only bestow upon you gratitude—sisterly affection—friendship!"

"Gratitude!" repeated Alfred, in dismay; "sisterly affection! Wherefore not love—such love as I offer thee?"

"I have at my command no love such as you claim," said Amy, sobbing convulsively.

"You love another?" exclaimed the desperate lover.

"It is true—I do love another truly, if not wisely," said Amy, in words scarcely intelligible from her sobs; "but I am no more fortunate than you—he loves me not, and I am most wretched indeed."

Alfred staggered to the door of the arbour; this sudden eclipse of his hopes left him for the moment powerless. Agony, deep, intense, was stamped upon every line of his pallid face. He felt around for support, as one seeking for a helping hand, and at last cast himself at full length upon the green sward. How long he lay there he did not know. He awoke to full consciousness to find it dark and himself alone. He heard voices, and the old people soon appeared with a light. They were in search of him, and began to inundate him with innumerable questions, but, fortunately, with an indisposition to await any reply. He learned, however, that an hour before, Amy had sought her room in a very distressed condition, and had since been in violent hysterics. She had sufficiently recovered to direct her mother to seek Alfred in the summer-house.

He determined to quit the house at once. It was late; the night was dark; even the stars were hidden by the mist, and the roads were obscure and dangerous. In vain

the anxious parents enumerated the terrors of a ride by night back to camp. They spoke of Elsie and her imps, of Claudie and his fierce men, who were said to occupy the vaults of the earth for many miles; of cow-boys, skinners, and other desperate creatures coeval with the time. The resolution of Alfred was unshaken. He was at least as desperate as they, and mounting his horse, reluctantly unstabled by the hospitable Squire, he plunged into darkness and solitude.

CHAPTER X.

THE DRAGOON'S OATH.

THE ride of Captain Horton from the Wards' to his camp was desperate enough. His horse, refreshed from the morning's chase, was as reckless as his master. Alfred passed the gorge without a feeling; no one disputed his mad race, and his gallant charger, covered with foam, ere long rushed into the slumbering camp. Horton responded to the challenge of the sentinels, and then, throwing the animal's rein to his attendant, he entered his tent, cast himself upon his bed, and there writhed beneath his pangs until the morning.

"Where can her heart have travelled?" he exclaimed to himself. "Is it toward that Englishman whom I chased? It is not impossible! When she spoke of him in the orchard, she seemed more deeply interested than her words expressed. There was great solicitude in her manner. It is he! That stripling and enemy has won her love, while I have her gratitude! She gave him refuge, too, for he never could have escaped without some such complicity. He could not have escaped so completely, had I properly sought him. But even his detec-

tion would not have promoted my suit. Oh, I, most unhappy! How I hate the seclusion of this camp. What is this?" he continued, casting his eyes upon a letter on the table. "It is Randolph's letter to Miss Woodfall! Poor anxious girl; it shall be delivered. I will not neglect the happiness of my friends in my own deep sorrows. Ah, Randolph, I have lived to disprove that illusion of yours!"

Mindful of his duty to Pauline, he mounted early the next morning and rode to Mr. Woodfall's. The house seemed neglected; the doors and windows were closed, an unusual circumstance in such fine weather, which made him apprehend that the chief object of his visit must be absent. The female who responded to his summons at the door, recognizing him, ushered him into the reception room. Her countenance was sombre, and so was that of the man who took his horse. He feared that some calamity had changed the aspect of both house and inmates. The servant returned with a desire that Captain Horton would proceed to Mr. Woodfall's room; as that gentleman was too ill to remove from it. He proceeded to the apartment. Upon a couch in the darkest corner reclined the old man.

"Captain Horton," said Mr. Woodfall. "You are welcome to this miserable home. I am now the only inmate of the family—Pauline is gone!"

"Miss Woodfall gone!" exclaimed Alfred, in astonishment.

"Stolen! abducted!" said the broken-hearted father. "My energy is gone—my heart is broken—"

"Sir," interposed Alfred, grasping the parent's hand, "relate to me the particulars of this terrible event. Make everything known. I am here with my men,

every one of whom will volunteer for the service. Cheer up, sir; think not of the past, but of the future. Reveal all to me, and then we will act!"

The old man's grasp tightened upon the hand of Alfred, while tears flowed down his furrowed cheek. He regained his composure remarkably, and then gave Alfred a very clear account of all the known circumstances of the abduction. It was a painful event, truly, for all. After thinking profoundly upon the matter, Horton enjoined the most scrupulous secrecy, and promising early attention to the case, hastened back to the camp. Once there, he wrote the following letter:—

"Randolph, my Friend,—Calamity has fallen upon the family of Pauline—calamity such as requires your presence to repair, if, indeed, it be capable of adjustment. There is something to avenge, which may require your troopers as well as your own sword. I write in urgency, and you cannot reach here too soon for the necessity of the occasion.

"Misfortune has visited me also. I should have grown frantic beneath her discipline, had not my energy been needed in your behalf. I have seen Amy; I asked her love. It was refused. She loves another, and gives me her sisterly affection as all that is at her disposal.

"ALFRED HORTON."

A messenger was sent with this letter to Captain Murray. Poor Alfred wrote lightly of the sorrows which pressed upon his own heart; but took no such liberty with the disaster of his friend. With rapidity unexpected the messenger returned. He bore the following letter:—

"Alfred, my Friend,—The terror of calamity to my Pauline gives wings to haste. You do not state the

nature or degree of the disaster to her family; but beneath a veil of mysterious words you leave me room to fear that something personal to Pauline has occurred; but I regard it as an inadvertence, caused by your great sorrow. The day you receive this I will be beside my Pauline, for, before your letter reached me, I had been ordered on the march.

"About Amy Ward: I feel almost to doubt, even against your unfortunate conviction, for I cannot imagine that she can love another at the painful expense of declining you.

"I enclose a line to Pauline. It will sustain her till I come.

"RANDOLPH MURRAY."

Horton sighed deeply as he read this letter.

"He is still unprepared for this terrible event," he said, "I hoped he would have put another construction upon my words; but I scarcely know what I wrote, my mind is so unfit for any subject but my own feelings and little sorrows—little compared with his. I will ride to the old camp, where he will doubtless take up his quarters, that he may have some intimation of the extent of this misfortune before he reaches Mr. Ward's house."

Captain Horton, reaching the old quarters, found that the troop had arrived. Randolph already was in the saddle, and about to start for Pauline's residence. The friends rejoiced to meet.

"Will you extend your ride and join me?" asked Randolph. "I need not tell you whither I am bound, nor that I shall give full liberty to Malvern to travel at his utmost speed."

"I will accompany you, Randolph," replied Alfred. "I have something to communicate, of a magnitude you are scarcely prepared to hear."

"Not Pauline—not Pauline, personally? You wrote, '*the family*,'" said Randolph, much agitated.

"To Pauline, personally," replied Alfred, aware that he must, sooner or later, divulge the frightful truth.

Randolph's face grew ghastly pale, and the bridle-rein fell from his hand. Placing his hand upon the shoulder of his friend as he rode beside him, he said :—

"Tell me, Alfred, is Pauline dead? I can bear it now."

"She lives, Randolph; but she has been abducted!"

"Abducted!" he exclaimed, in increased agony. "My lovely Pauline fallen into an enemy's hand? It is worse than death. Is it known by whom she was seized?"

Captain Horton related at length all that he had learned, as well as his adventure with the British officer, who, he suspected, was a confederate with Claudie in the outrage.

Randolph listened calmly to this recital; but it was the calmness of desperation. He would not trust his voice; but resuming his bridle, the friends increased their pace and soon reached the residence of Mr. Woodfall. The health of that gentleman had improved after Horton's visit. When Randolph, however, entered the room, the father was again quite unmanned, and wept convulsively.

"Oh, Randolph, whom poor Pauline loved beyond herself," he said, at length, "your presence gives me assurance that I shall again see my daughter. My feeble hands are almost useless, but such as they are you may command them. I am weak and unfit to guide, but ready to follow even into death's door."

"My worthy sir, I pity your sufferings, although my own are above expression," said Randolph. "I will do all that is possible to man. The villains shall feel my vengeance be assured; but whether we shall ever behold

Pauline again is a matter of doubt. There is an innate virtue in her heart that forbids her to survive dishonour, so that, if ever I restore her to your arms, you may receive her as the same Pauline that you lost. Now I must visit the garden, view the last spot on which Pauline trod, and then I will pursue those wolves with the remorseless feelings of the tiger bereft of its young."

Randolph entered the garden, walked beside the fence described to him as that over which the British officer had conversed with Pauline, and then proceeded toward the upland wood. He passed with a sigh what to him were sacred spots. Then he plunged into the wood, and rushed beneath the trees that had sheltered the wretches who had committed the base crime. Every place was carefully examined, but not a trace remained to indicate the course pursued in the flight. Like a foiled lion, he came forth from the wood, and throwing himself upon his knees before that chair where he had first whispered love in Pauline's ear, and listened in boundless joy to her coy response, he clasped his hands as he cried :—

"Hear me, O Heaven! I swear, by my honour, by my love, by my hopes of peace, to pursue the authors of this crime to the death, and to cease not until they be blotted from existence. I swear it by my sword and my right hand!"

When Randolph was about to rise, he perceived that Alfred Horton knelt beside him. They rose together and walked toward the house, but neither of them could utter a syllable.

"Alfred," said Randolph, when they had rested a few minutes in the house, "I have two visits to make; one to Elsie Turner and the other to Amy Ward. Elsie is wise in the doings of the district. She can afford me information

if she will; if not, I will drive her like an enemy from the retreat she holds upon no right save that of tenantry. Amy may, in the moment of her woman's vengeance, when I relate to her the wrongs of Pauline by the violence of this Briton, punish his perfidy to her by some disclosure. But, Alfred, I will be gentle with her; fear me not." Then, turning to Mr. Woodfall, he continued: "I cannot revisit you before the morning. Alfred will remain with you another hour, and in the evening will meet me at my camp. Be confident that I will unravel this mystery. If I cannot regain Pauline, I am no less prepared than you to die."

He rode rapidly to the retreat of Elsie. He knew nothing of the means of entrance; but he remembered the channel through which the water ran, and resolved to follow that. Approaching the gorge, he perceived Goblin, and, leaping from his horse, seized the dwarf and desired him to lead the way to Elsie. The poor creature pointed up the water-course. Randolph insisted upon being personally guided, and was conducted up the dark channel, and debouched into the singular basin of hills which Amy had once visited. Seeing the hut, he at once strode toward it. The door was open. Inside sat a gaunt, aged woman, who regarded Randolph with a look of the most ineffable composure.

"You are Elsie Turner, I suppose?" said Randolph.

"I am, Randolph Murray," replied the old woman.

"You are supposed to be acquainted with everything that occurs?" said Randolph, endeavouring to conceal his astonishment at her unperturbed coolness; "little escapes you which transpires within this district. Your means of information appear to be fruitful."

Randolph paused to watch the effect of his words; but

the shrewd Elsie did not speak; she sat silently gazing in his eyes. He resumed:—

“An outrage has been perpetrated—”

“I know it, Randolph Murray; I know all about it,” interposed the old crone; “I know, too, that you are come to heap the consequences upon the head of poor, helpless Elsie. If you want her life, it is an aged one; if you desire her possessions, they are scarcely worth the holding; if you seek her art, it dies with her. All these I have ceased to value, and your violence will be unfelt by me.”

“Elsie, my passions are fierce, for a great wrong is to be avenged. A crime against humanity and innocence has been perpetrated, which I were base indeed did I not resent. I cry aloud for vengeance, which is just, and must be executed. Will you guide me on my path?”

“I cannot, Randolph Murray,” replied Elsie, calmly.

“Is not a British officer the chief instigator of this crime?”

“No doubt, you’re well instructed in that matter.”

“Is not Claudie another of the miscreants?”

“‘Have a care how you speak ill of Claudie, if you would see to-morrow’s sun,’ is a correct saying of the country here,” exclaimed Elsie, with energy.

“Elsie,” continued Randolph, perceiving by her answer that she was Claudie’s friend, and doubtless one of his coadjutors, “does Pauline Woodfall live?”

“She lives, and is uninjured in body and in honour,” replied Elsie.

“God be thanked for that!” he ejaculated, with undisguised fervour. “If she be thus safe and unharmed, it shall go less bloodily for the Briton and the traitor Claudie. Farewell! I will now seek Amy Ward, whom

I suspect of having a greater knowledge of this mysterious stranger than either you or I."

"Amy Ward!" exclaimed Elsie. "Then speak her kindly, Randolph; address her in the words of love, for she is so powerful with this British officer, that she could procure the restoration of Pauline."

Randolph looked around to confer some recompense upon Goblin; but the pigmy had disappeared from view. He returned through the gloomy gorge, and, leaping upon his horse, rode toward Squire Ward's residence. He was welcomed by the family. The sweetest of smiles rested upon Amy's face, but she was pale, nervous, excited. A fire gleamed in her eyes which Murray never before had observed. It startled and pained him. The two young persons were soon alone, and sauntered into the orchard.

"Miss Ward," he commenced, "have you any knowledge of a horseman who dresses himself in the costume of a British officer, and rides much in your vicinity?"

Amy did not reply; but Randolph perceived that her hand trembled, her bosom was convulsed, and her lips became colourless. Murray resumed the subject:—

"He is unfit for aught but guilty association. He has abducted a daughter from her father, whose sorrow has nearly borne him to the grave; and by the same infamy he has deprived a faithful suitor of the dearest tie he had to life."

Amy still said nothing; but she could not conceal her agitation. Randolph proceeded—

"But retribution approaches. Pauline will not be unavenged. I have sworn an oath, and Alfred Horton knelt with me at the shrine where I first unveiled to her my love, that I would pursue the villains to a bloody atonement. I swore by my right hand—"

"Hold, hold, in mercy!" screamed Amy, grasping the arm of Randolph, "you know not what you say, nor of whom you speak! Recall that fearful oath, for there is a relation between that officer and me that cannot be severed."

"My oath is uttered! It has ascended there!" exclaimed Randolph, with terrible energy, pointing upward.

"Hear me, Captain Murray," exclaimed Amy, rising, and resting for support against a tree, "before your rage drives reason entirely from my mind. I know this horseman, and you know him too. I have heard him speak of you with affection, and, speaking from my own judgment, I believe in my heart that it was more in the spirit of solicitude than crime that this person has acted."

"I would consider," replied Randolph, contemptuously, "a lady's character compromised by such subterfuge in defence of villany, was the speaker other than Miss Ward. As it is, I will attribute your conduct to the natural desire of a woman who is blind to shield one who must be her lover. But you are weak; permit me to assist you to the house."

Amy leaned upon his arm, silent, trembling, agonized. As they approached the door, she asked, in a voice that exhibited the depth of her interest, and of her agony:—

"Captain Murray, what will be your next step?"

"To-morrow," replied Randolph, "I shall be in the caverns of the Ramapo, for there, I believe, the monster reposes with his prisoner. He would not leave Claudie's fastness for fear of arrest, and there I shall, doubtless, find him."

Randolph took his leave. Before he was out of view, the strange horseman was seen flying towards the Ramapo!

CHAPTER XII.

THE STORMING OF THE CASTLE.

RANDOLPH's respect for Amy Ward was greatly shaken by this last interview. He could not understand her relations with the Briton ; but he felt that she was compromised in patriotism if not in honour by them. Reaching camp, he related the occurrences of the last few hours to Alfred, who had awaited his return. The two friends did not essay to penetrate the mystery, but proceeded at once to arrange for their morrow's work of invasion. Randolph at length thus ordered :—

“ At dawn, march toward the Ramapo. I will proceed by the gorge, and we will form a junction at the end of the ravine. Disperse your men well upon the plain. Seize every stranger, and enlist every inhabitant who will lend his assistance, for we must destroy the infamous gang that lurks in that ravine. Induce Mr. Woodfall to ride with you, his presence will greatly excite the people of the neighbourhood in his behalf.”

Randolph, fully convinced that Claudie was concerned in the abduction of Pauline, and that he directly or indirectly still had her in his power, resolved to march along the whole length of the Ramapo, to search it, yard by yard, that he might penetrate its most secret shelters, hoping to discover the haunts of the brigands, or to capture one or more of the villains, and force them, by the promise of pardon, to divulge the hiding-place of their chief.

The morning opened bright and cheerful. The men were early in the saddle, and the march commenced. As he approached the gorge, Randolph discerned Goblin speeding toward the entrance. The leader at once

dashed forward and soon held Elsie's messenger prisoner. Murray at once resolved to make the boy his pilot.

"Goblin, do you know where Claudie is this morning?"

The affrighted lad nodded his head in assent.

"Can you guide me to his quarters?"

At this moment all attention was rivetted upon another object. Upon a point of rock high above the gorge stood in full relief a female figure. Her arms were uncovered, her head was bare, and her white hair floated in the breeze.

"Randolph Murray!" Her voice rung out clear and strong. "Thou seekest Claudie! He is in his den. Pauline is there. I demanded her release, that thou mightest have thine own. He has refused, and thou shalt have justice. Goblin shall conduct thee to the chambers of the mountains."

She disappeared, and Murray turned to the boy for the promised guidance, who at once led off toward the Ramapo. Keeping well up in the hills, soon the dragoons met Captain Horton's infantry at the place assigned. Mr. Woodfall was with them. Randolph, in a few words, related the incidents of the road, and the friends made preparations for decisive steps. It was inferred that Claudie must have several avenues of escape, therefore the cavalry were thrown out to watch events, while to Alfred and his men was deputed the honour of penetrating the cave.

Meanwhile the greatest confusion prevailed beneath the earth. Elsie had visited the brigand's lair, and peremptorily demanded Pauline's release, to save bloodshed and prevent the troopers from penetrating into the mountain fastnesses. But the chief was not a man to yield in the face of danger. He counted upon his own strength, and the secret caverns of the hills, to put at

defiance even the indomitable Captain Murray. He refused Elsie's demands, and somewhat peremptorily bid her away. She left with a threat half muttered on her lips. Scarcely had she gone when Claudie's scouts arrived with intelligence that two parties of soldiers were approaching the Ramapo from different directions, one of them being mounted. Soon others reached the cavern with information yet more startling, that the dwarf, Goblin, was with the horsemen as pilot!

"What punishment does our brotherhood award to one who discloses the secret of our cavern?"

"Death!" shouted the infuriated men.

"Then if Goblin and Elsie are false, let death be their portion, to be dealt by the first of the brotherhood that may meet them!"

They had scarcely growled their terrible assent, when the report of firearms was heard from a distant gallery, and Claudie exclaimed:—

"Ha! they have entered, and at the extremity of the gallery I had intended for our escape. Stand by me, my braves, and we will beat them out. Up the gallery, scoundrels! Be cool, fire low, and keep well in the hollows of the walls. Ha! that was a deafening volley! Reply, boys, quickly, and then to your holes. More harmony in the distance! Do you hear it? They are getting it, my brave lads, and seem retreating!"

Goblin had faithfully led the way to the entrance; but, knowing the one used by Claudie was strongly guarded, he pointed out another which he had long before discovered. Alfred boldly entered with his men, and hoped to take the scoundrels at a disadvantage, but he found the enemy prepared. A furious discharge of musketry ensued, which occasioned such loss to the assailants, without inflicting

any perceptible injury upon their adversaries, that Captain Horton thought it prudent to retire and consult with Randolph.

The two officers discussed the feasibility of several plans, and had decided upon a second attempt by way of the main entrance, when Goblin rushed from the underbrush.

"Quick!" he said, in a low voice, "the robbers have quitted the cavern, and are now escaping down the mountains!"

"By the powers of my sword, this villain must not escape!" the dragoon exclaimed. "Blow the rally!" he shouted to the bugler. The usual notes ran among the hills, and soon the troopers came running in. "Into the mountains, men! Spare not a flying robber! Keep in sergeants' squads. Away with you!"

The men flew off on their free command, followed at a run by the infantry, who were as eager for the pursuit as hounds on the quick scent. Randolph and Horton were about to penetrate to the cavern by the now unguarded entrance, when they were confronted by Elsie.

"Back!" she cried. "All are gone from here save one, who has laid a train to the magazine, and will explode it to your destruction. Pauline is gone—borne away by the flying Claudie. Hasten to the hills, or he may yet escape!"

It needed not another word to turn their steps. The two officers mounted the rocks, guided by the shouts and reports of firearms which they heard from above and far off among the hills. Suddenly they heard a pistol-shot, and then a woman's scream. Both stood appalled for a moment, and then dashed off to the spot indicated. Goblin appeared to come out of the very earth at that instant.

"Here, quick, follow me!"

The two men rushed after him, and soon stood over the body of the British officer, who lay writhing on the ground in pain, his face concealed in the grass, and the blood slowly oozing from a wound in the side.

"Don't stop!" said Goblin, "Claudie has the lady in his arms, and has gone down this ravine!"

At the sound of voices, the officer tried to rise. Alfred helped him up; but, catching a sight of his face, staggered like one stricken with dismay. Yet he clasped the form closer to his bosom, and the eyes of Amy Ward gazed full in his face.

Randolph and Goblin had already flown in the pursuit. Alfred was alone—dead to all sights, all sounds, save that of the dying form in his arms.

"Alfred—dear Alfred. Kiss me before I go. I have done wrong—oh, so wrong! but it was not irreparable, for I was going to return Pauline safely to her home, and have tried for many days to effect her release, but Claudie has prevented. She is unharmed. I bore her away from Randolph because he flung my wild love at his feet, and I was mad. It was all wrong, wicked, and I am justly punished. Claudie shot me as I attempted to take Pauline from his grasp. I pray God he may not, in his fury, kill poor Pauline! Ah, Alfred, how little we know of life until it is ebbing away from us. I love you—love you dearly; that I know—why have I permitted revenge to be my guiding motive? Alas! I know not—it is all so strange. And I thought, too, that Elsie would surely assist me—" Her voice failed, and the sentence remained unspoken. The astonished Alfred laid her tenderly upon the turf, while she kept close hold of his hand. A brief struggle, and all was over; Amy Ward lay dead before him.

Randolph, preceded by Goblin, soon came upon the brigand, pushing his way down through the jungle of a wild ravine. The villain stopped when he found pursuers upon his track, and, placing his stalwart form before the terrified and half senseless Pauline, confronted the dragoon. Seeing that Captain Murray was alone, he levelled his only loaded pistol, and fired with a celerity which found Murray perfectly unprepared. Something bounded in the air before the dragoon, and Goblin fell at his feet, pierced by the pistol-ball. Murray rushed upon the bandit, and a terrible hand-to-hand struggle commenced over the body of the now perfectly inanimate Pauline. It was of short duration, however. Another actor appeared upon the scene. It was Elsie. For a moment she stood over the form of Goblin; then walked deliberately up to the two men, drew a knife from her belt, and drove it into the brigand's sword-arm, rendering him powerless. Without saying a word, she turned, picked up Goblin's body, and disappeared. Randolph and his enemy both were too astonished at the moment to move. But the sight of Pauline recalled the lover to his duty. Springing upon Claudie he bore him to the earth and disarmed him, just in time to be relieved from further care by the appearance of a squad of his troopers. The men seized the brigand, and soon were proceeding to camp with him, where, on the morrow, he and the half-dozen of his band who had escaped the speedier death among the hills were shot as outlaws and murderers.

Randolph, raising Pauline in his arms, pressed her to his bosom. The joy of the meeting was too great even for his great heart, and he wept like a child. But it was only a momentary weakness. The inanimate woman did

not come back to sensibility at his call, nor did kisses pressed upon her eyes and lips unclasp the seals upon them. He then proceeded to bathe her temples and lips with liquor from his canteen, and soon had the truant again recalled to the waiting body. She opened her eyes—gazed steadily for a while upon Randolph, as if recalling the past, and then, throwing her arms around his neck, wept tears of a great happiness upon his breast. Soon, however, she rose, and, moving away from him, gave such a look of agony as pierced his very soul within him.

“Oh, my father—where is he? Take me to him!”

There was so much distress in her tone, that Randolph advanced, as if to clasp her again to his arms; but she motioned him away, crying:—

“No—no, Randolph; I am not yours; a great sea is between us, and I shall perish in it. My father! lead me to him, as my only protector!”

The Captain stood for a moment like one in a dream.

“Not mine!” he murmured. “Not mine!” A painful thought flitted across his brain, and he turned as pale as a corpse. “Come!” he said, solemnly, but firmly, and he led the way up the ravine. In silence they walked, not touching hands even. Soon they came upon a sight which turned the current of their emotions. Before them sat Captain Horton, holding in his lap the head of the dead officer! Alfred arose, and seizing Randolph’s arm, pointed to the dead body:—

“There lies Amy Ward!”

“Amy Ward! Impossible!” said Randolph. “It is the Briton—the author of all my misery!”

“Nevertheless, it is Amy Ward,” said Alfred, while tears coursed down his cheeks, and he flung himself upon

the ground in a burst of grief, which it was very painful to contemplate.

Pauline had not moved. The revelation, so sudden, so incomprehensible, was too much for her distracted senses. She remained as immovable as a statue, and quite as pale. Her appearance aroused Randolph. He touched her shoulder.

"Pauline!"

She came slowly back to a realization of the scene before her. Then she extended both hands to Captain Murray, while yet her gaze was fixed intently upon the face of the dead Amy.

"I see it now, though dimly, darkly," she murmured; "Amy it was who lured me away—Amy it was who had the rites of marriage with me solemnized, to protect me from the approach of others—Amy it is who has died before me. I am not, then, a wife, and I am yours, my dear Randolph—yours only!"

Her eyes were now lifted to his own, and her face gleamed with such a light as could only radiate from a soul of angelic purity. Her lover drew her to his breast, and imprinted a fervid kiss upon her upturned forehead, as he said:—

"I thank thee, O most merciful Heaven, for the bliss of this moment, and for the great blessing bestowed I here forgive all the past!"

A sound of approaching feet was now heard; a couple of troopers approached, leading Hogget by the arm, a prisoner. She appeared astonished at the scene before her, but soon recovered:—

"Gentlemen," she said, "there is a mystery here I cannot comprehend. This dead officer is Captain Henry, of the British army. He was married to Miss Pauline

there, in the cavern, though she never saw him after this sad day. And now I see, by the long hair and the fair throat, that Captain Henry is no man, but a woman. It is all very strange !”

Alfred, who had regained his composure and had risen to his feet, now repeated Amy's dying words, and Randolph began to see, though indistinctly, through the singular circumstances, and to appreciate Pauline's peculiar sufferings. He pressed her more tenderly to his breast, and led the way down out of the mountains, accompanied by Hogget, while the troopers and the afflicted Alfred bore the body of Amy away to the house which was now to be rendered so desolate.

It is barely possible to conceive the nature of Alfred's feelings over the finale and fatal *dénouement*. That Amy had pursued a remarkable, and, to him, an unaccountable part, he freely admitted ; but that she had tried to do right at last he as fully believed as his love for her was true. And the touching reference she had made to her conduct and to her love for her preserver, came to him like a Gospel of forgiveness—he pressed his hand upon his heart to still the great cry that welled up on his lips for the loss he had incurred. Others might mourn her as parents, as friends ; but he, before all, was chief mourner.

The body had scarcely reached its destination, ere Randolph, Pauline, and Mr. Woodfall arrived, to know, if possible, more of the strange relations of Amy with the abduction, as well as to console the dreadfully-bereaved parents. Pauline was pained beyond words ; that she should have been instrumental in exciting the bandit to the deed of killing one whom she now knew was not her enemy, was, for a while, the source of poignant grief.

The parents, though astonished and overwhelmed for a moment, soon became calm, and regarded the event in a matter-of-fact way, which it was difficult for others to explain, who had known with what tenderness Amy had been cherished. It is not the most openly-expressed sorrow which is deepest and most enduring. The Squire admitted that his daughter had done wrong—said it was queer that she should have chosen to make friends with the enemies of her country; but assumed that, as Amy was of age, she had a perfect right to do as she pleased. This was his only reference to her conduct, and if he or his wife condemned or applauded the spirit of their adventurous child none ever knew, for they were silent over their bereavement.

From all that was known, as well as from Hogget's developments, Captain Murray could not look upon the dead Amy with other feelings than that of deep commiseration. She had loved him so much that no sacrifice was too great for her to make, even to the theft of her he claimed as his own—truly a fearful expression of her passion and her spirit. The soul of resentment within him had passed away, and he dropped over Amy's grave the tears of a heartfelt sorrow.

Alfred mourned not, to outward eyes, but his friend read in the pale, calm face, a sorrow too holy even for sympathy. Much as Randolph loved him, he did not fail to perceive that a shadow was between them, and when, after the burial, Alfred said adieu in tones of tenderness, Murray knew it was also an adieu to all their old confidences—old affections. Captain Horton left camp at once, proceeded to head-quarters, obtained from Washington an immediate call to the field, and the country, for many a month, was startled by the daring of

his exploits. At last a lull came in the story of his deeds, and the brave man found death by fever in the hospital—not on the field of battle, where he had so often courted the grim messenger. Murray sought him out, was with him to the last, and executed his dying request—to be laid by the side of Amy Ward. The old but still well-preserved monument, down deep in the bosom of a quiet valley among the hills of Orange County, attests that Captain Alfred Horton, of the Continental Army, and Amy Ward sleep together in peace.

The result of the assault on the brigand's retreat wrought sudden changes in the fortunes of many of our characters. To Pauline and Randolph it brought, along with its pain, a bliss intensified by suffering. The marriage, soon celebrated, filled the cup of a bliss not often vouchsafed to man in turbulent times. To Elsie it brought change, for she disappeared wholly from Black Hollow—whither, no one ever knew. A grave near the old hut marked the resting-place of Goblin; but over his resting-place rested a mystery which time did not dispel. The hut went to ruin, along with all its relics and garniture, for none cared (or dared, shall we say?) to enter the precincts of Black Hollow, after Randolph ascertained by inspection that Elsie was gone. To Hogget it brought change—not unpleasant, for she became an inmate of Pauline's house; and when, in after years, she cherished in her arms the two sons and a daughter of the peaceful household, she did not fail to bless the day that sent Pauline Woodfall a prisoner to her cave.

THE SEMINOLE CHIEF.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD MAN'S STORY.

THE Everglades of Florida! How much of interest clustered around them during the memorable war of 18—. How many scenes were there enacted, presenting all that is terrible in warfare, both civilized and barbarous! The midnight massacre, the desolating flame, the stake and the gibbet, the pursuit and the ambush, broken treaties and vile treachery, the captive maiden and the grey-haired sire, terror and blood, were familiar topics in every household throughout the happier regions, while in that wild country the reality was felt to its fullest extent. Twenty millions of people were eagerly watching the movements of two warrior chieftains, Colonels Taylor and Twiggs, expecting a happy termination of hostilities, and another star to be added to those shining amid the constellation of America's Own.

At the time of which we write, there had been a cessation of hostilities for over a year. That is, of actual hostilities. But the Seminoles were becoming very bold in their depredations, which had been continued for several months, while the commander of the United States forces used his best endeavours to put an end to them by the capture and punishment of those directly connected with each outrage. This, however, he found very difficult to accomplish; and at length gave notice to the

chief of the Seminoles—an intelligent but relentless Indian or half-breed, known as “Billy Bowlegs”—that if his warriors did not observe, to the letter, the treaties which had been made between his tribe and the federal authorities, he might expect extermination.

In justice to the chief, we are compelled to say that he did not encourage, or even countenance, the outrages committed by his men upon the defenceless settlers. He was, nevertheless, burning with hatred toward the pale-face invaders of his soil, and the word “extermination” grated harshly upon his ear. He therefore returned a defiant answer.

At that time Colonel Twiggs (afterwards General) occupied a post of considerable importance at Tampa Bay, near the spot where now stands Fort Brooke. Under his command were about three hundred soldiers. They held possession of a rude, though strong work, known as Fort Chickakanile, an appellation given it by the garrison. There was, also, quite a settlement at this point, perhaps thirty or forty dwellings, some of which were occupied by soldiers and their families, others by settlers and transient traders, drawn thither from its importance as a military post.

Directly across the country, and toward the Atlantic coast, there had been cut a military road, through a dense forest, a distance of perhaps a hundred miles. This had been done for the purpose of exploring the interior of the State, for the pursuit of the savages, and for the removal of the valuable live oak which is found so abundantly in that locality. This road terminated at a beautiful sheet of water, known as Lake Kissimmee. A river of the same name, which forms the outlet of this lake, flows through a most lovely valley, emptying its clear waters

into Lake Okeechobee. This latter lake is of considerable importance in size, notwithstanding it is situated far inland, with no body of water of any size connecting it and the ocean or bay. It is comparatively unknown to fame, although, at the present time, it can boast of several small settlements along its margin, while on its northern shore is a fort, known as Fort Floyd. Directly south of this lake are the Everglades of Florida, which afforded such protection for the savages, who, seeking shelter within them, and guided by the cunning Billy, so long baffled the efforts of our troops for their capture.

It was a night in the month of December; the winds swept across the Gulf, and sighed mournfully through the oaks, and the mad waters lashed the base of Chickakamicle with a fury unprecedented. The guard buttoned his coat tightly around him, and shuddered, for even in those southern latitudes the nights of winter are sometimes bitterly cold. It was perhaps the hour of eleven. Everything within the fort and settlement was quiet, and only an occasional light gleamed from a trader's cabin, or some officer's quarters. Presently, a voice was heard to exclaim:—

“Halt! Who comes there?”

In answer to the challenge of the sentinel, a voice replied:—

“An old man from the lake wishes to see the commander.”

“Impossible to night. He has retired.”

“But my business is most urgent.”

“Business always is.”

“But, sir,” continued the old man, “it is concerning the Indians, and a renegade, and my only daughter,

too!" The voice quivered with emotion. "An hour's delay may ruin all. I pray you inform the colonel what I say."

"Well, I'll try. Hold on a bit. Corporal of the guard," called the sentinel. In a few moments this person made his appearance, and, after learning the occasion of the call, he determined at once to consult the lieutenant of the guard. This being done, that officer said:—

"Certainly. Bring the old man to my quarters at once." The applicant was soon within the fort, and was met by the lieutenant.

"I thank you, sir, with all my heart," said the old man. "My child is gone—has been taken—" he could not proceed, for his choked voice failed of utterance.

"Never mind now," interrupted the officer. "I understand you are in trouble with the redskins, and that your daughter has been torn from you. This is enough for Ned Judson to know, until you make further statements in the presence of the commanding officer. Follow me." He led the way through a long range of winding passages, and at length paused at the door of an ordinary-looking building. A light was visible through a small window, which was curtained, however, thus preventing any person on the outside from peering within. The lieutenant knocked loudly at the door.

"Come in," was the quiet response. The party entered.

Seated at the table, examining some papers, was a man of marked appearance. He was powerfully built, while his beard, which was almost white, covered his chin and throat, hanging in heavy masses upon his breast. He arose to receive his visitors. A person of more commanding mien did not belong to the service. It was Colonel David Twiggs.

"What is your business, Lieutenant Judson?" asked the colonel.

"To present this old gentleman to you."

"You have business with me?" asked the commander.

"I have," replied the old man, with still tremulous voice.

"Be seated, sir" Then resuming his place at the table, and drawing paper, pen, and ink before him, as if preparing to write, the colonel asked:—

"Your name, sir?"

"It is Stephen Loveday, colonel."

"And your residence?"

"Is near Lake Kissimmee."

"Well, go on and state your business with me."

"I will, colonel. It is now nearly a year since my daughter Jesse was stolen from me by a ruffian called James MacDonald, better known as Black Jim the renegade."

"I have heard of the villain. But go on."

"I made every effort to find my child, but in vain. At length I gave her up as dead. Still, in spite of my better judgment, a father's love has revived a father's hopes many times, and I have dreamed my darling would yet be restored to me."

"I cannot see that you have any especial reason to despair. She is probably among the Indians, and I will demand her return."

"Oh! God bless you, colonel. But I may learn where she is to-night."

"In what manner?"

"I was going to explain. Four days ago, I saw a party of the savages pass my cabin. Among their number were many whom I have seen before under the command

of Black Jim, and that villain himself. I saw them strike into the millitary road, and the thought occurred to me that they might be coming here."

"How many were there?"

"About fifty."

"It is not a war-party then?"

"They were not in their war-paint."

"Perhaps the proclamation I issued has had its effect, in spite of the defiant answer that Billy Bowlegs sent me. Was he with the party?"

"I do not know, colonel. I have never seen him to my knowledge."

"Neither have I. He is a strange savage. Always present, but never seen. But, go on with your story."

"Well, sir, it was hard work for the old man to travel twenty-five miles a-day, and sleep upon the ground at night in the cold. Of course, I dared not build a fire for fear of being discovered. But something nerved me up, and I arrived here as soon as they."

"Where are this party?"

"There are about forty-six or seven of them concealed in the forest upon the opposite side of the river. Three of them crossed in a small canoe. I also succeeded in finding a little boat, and in reaching this side."

"Did you lose sight of the three?"

"I did. But, as I was passing one of the traders' cabins in the settlement, I saw them drinking within."

"Yes, I understand. These red devils are whisky mad, and must have it at any price. The chief has undoubtedly sent this party forward to purchase it. They will be off soon."

"But my child!" exclaimed the old man.

"Well, what has all this to do with her?"

"Black Jim is one of the three who are drinking at the cabin. Will you not have him arrested, and force from him a confession as to what has become of my Jessie?"

"Of course I will. Lieutenant Judson, order out a file of men; arrest the Indians and the notorious Black Jim, and bring them to my quarters at once. I will have the truth from that fellow, or he shall hang."

"Thank you, colonel. If my child can only be found, the old man will bless you for ever."

"How old was your daughter?"

"She was but seventeen when she was stolen."

"Well, you may accompany the lieutenant for the purpose of pointing out where these fellows are. We will settle the matter soon."

The officer left the room, followed by Mr. Loveday, and proceeded to detail the guard. As they moved toward the spot, Judson asked:—

"Was Jessie your only child?"

"My only living child."

"Is her mother living?"

"No."

"Did you not have a son by the name of Frederick?"

"Oh! my poor boy, Fred. Did you know him?"

"I knew Fred Loveday, and as noble a boy he was as ever trod the deck of a wars-man."

"But he is gone!"

"Yes, poor Fred fell, through the treachery of a red-skin."

"Tell me the particulars."

"I know but little of the affair. We were anchored off the Florida coast, when your son, with a party of two others, visited the shore in a small boat. They were cap-

tured by a band of savages, and brutally murdered. Their bodies were thrown into the Gulf."

"I have heard this before; but I am glad to meet one who knew my Fred."

"I wonder that you remain in this horrible country, now that you are alone. You have suffered much from the savages."

"True; but it is the spot where rest the remains of my beloved partner, and it seems like hallowed ground. I could not leave it."

"If you find your daughter, would you not leave it for her sake?"

"Oh! yes. In that case, I should leave it at once. But we are at the cabin now, and there are the villains."

Judson at once entered with his soldiers, when the party sprung to their feet, and one of them asked, in plain English:—

"What means this?"

"James MacDonald, you and your companions are under arrest."

In a few moments they were conveyed to the quarters of Colonel Twiggs.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOST CHILD.

As Judson entered the colonel's apartment with his prisoners, Twiggs raised his eyes, and fixed upon them a withering look. Although there was lightning in that gaze, it did not appear in the least to disturb or disconcert the captives, for they returned the gaze steadily, while a contemptuous curl settled upon their lips. Twiggs saw this, and it rendered him furious. He struck the table,

beside which he was sitting, a violent blow with his clenched fist, and exclaimed, in a loud voice:—

"Dogs, put less of insolence in your looks, or I will hang you in ten minutes."

"Are you the Od-deen-yo?" asked one of the party.

"What do you mean by Od-deen-yo?"

"Ugh! The white chief of—of these cut-throats."

The speaker pointed to the guard, and indicated those without.

"Cut-throats, do you call them? Then I will have them verify your appellation by commencing upon you."

"Are you Colonel Twiggs?"

"I am. What then?"

"Then you are a coward!"

"By heavens!" shrieked the colonel, as he seized his sword and sprung upon the speaker, "I will teach you to apply such language to me." He was about to strike, but, seeing the captive stand with arms folded, and without indicating the slightest fear, he paused. Twiggs was not the man to commit such an act as to cleave down an unarmed prisoner. He gazed upon his captive a moment, and then said:—

"I do not care to strike a prisoner. But your insult provoked me, and your manner is insolent."

"I will prove that you are a coward, by your own standard."

"Go on, then." He became interested. The speaker's cool audacity had conquered.

"In the first place, you insulted us by your manner; that called forth the expression upon our faces. You then threatened to hang us. And for what? Because we looked contempt. You insulted a helpless, unarmed prisoner, which none but a coward will do."

Twiggs bit his lips in silence, for he well knew this was true. But he added :—

“It was the impulse of the moment.”

“Was it? Well, let me tell you one thing. Had yourself and two of your friends been the only party in this room to contend with us, you would not have dared to speak and act as you did. And you must not dare again; for I, at least, am armed with a knife, and I will not brook an insult tamely, even if my life answers for an attempt to resent it. Why were we brought here prisoners?”

“Is your name James MacDonald?”

“It is.”

“What were you doing in this settlement?”

“I came to purchase some articles which I needed. But, I take it, we have a right to visit a trading-post without being arrested, or questioned either.”

“How many came with you?”

“You see them all before you.”

“You are a liar! There are nearly fifty of your tribe concealed in the woods, opposite the river.”

“But they are not in the settlement,” was the ready response. “They are simply awaiting, upon the other side, to convey such things as we might purchase to the lake. But how did you know that our warriors were opposite?”

“Do you know that old man?” The colonel pointed to old Mr. Loveday. MacDonald turned, and, gazing upon the old man an instant, said, with something like a sneer :—

“I think it is my father-in-law.”

“Villain!” cried the old man, as he clutched MacDonald by the throat, “where is my child—my poor Jessie?”

"Take your hands off, old man!" yelled the renegade. At the same instant he hurled him, with great violence, to the floor. The wretched father received a wound upon the head, from which the blood flowed freely, and was otherwise bruised, but was not rendered insensible. The villain was immediately seized by the soldiers, and tightly bound.

"Now answer me," exclaimed Twiggs, and there was a meaning in his tone; "where is Jessie Loveday?"

"I know of no such person."

"You stole her from my home, and conveyed her to your tribe," cried the old man; "and, if she is alive, you must know where she is. Oh! tell a wretched father!"

"Had you not better make another attempt to squeeze the information out of my throat?" added the villain.

"I will do that, very soon, if you do not answer," replied Twiggs.

"Oh! I will answer, for it will tickle the old man. Not, sir, because I fear you, even though I am bound."

"Where is my child?"

"At my home, in the Everglades."

"Then she is alive and well?"

"Yes, and happy!"

"Happy! How can she be happy while she is a captive, and away from her poor old father, who loves her so much!"

"She is with a husband who loves her, and whom she loves. Why should she not be happy?"

"Is she indeed married?"

"She is; I am her husband—that is, we were married according to Indian rites."

"That is no marriage at all. Oh! will you not restore her to me?"

understood the Seminole tongue, that his replies were at all intelligible.

"What is your name?" asked Twiggs.

"Ugh!"

"Name! Big chief?"

"Ugh!" repeated the savage, shaking his head. "Name On-yit-ha."

"What is the meaning of that name, Lieutenant Judson?"

"I think, colonel, it signifies night-hawk, or owl. It does in some of the more northern tribes, and I believe the word is general."

"Where is your chief?"

"Ugh!"

"Big Indian. Big chief. Billy Bowlegs?"

"There. Ugh!" The savage pointed outside.

"Billy must be with the band upon the opposite side of the river," said Twiggs. "If so, it bodes us no good. See that a sharp look-out is kept, and the men in readiness to repel any attack. I will question these fellows more closely to-morrow. I expect a portion of Colonel Taylor's command to join us in a few days, and then I shall proceed against the Indian stronghold. Question this fellow yourself, and see if you can make anything out of him." Judson did this, and gleaned the information that the chief in person had come to treat with Twiggs, and that he desired peace, and would use his best endeavours to prevent further outrage. It was the impression, however, that the savage was only feigning his ignorance of the English language, and that he was deceiving. He was therefore secured, and the others retired for the night, after receiving special instructions as to the guard.

CHAPTER III.

RETALIATION.

It was some time after midnight before all was again quiet at the fort. The guard had been doubled on the side of the settlement next the river. But, on the sea-side it was deemed unnecessary. It was upon or near the beach, and but a short distance from the works, that the two captives were bound. Two guards were placed over the prisoners, who were not over-vigilant, for reason that the Indian and the renegade were so securely bound. But the American savage is seldom without resources. Nor did this occasion prove an exception.

The four o'clock relief had just passed its rounds, when, to the rear of the fort, a dark object appeared, creeping along with cat-like stealth toward the spot where MacDonald was bound. Not even the crackling of a twig nor a movement of the stunted canebrake which grew in this place, nor the rolling of a stone, betrayed the presence of any human being to the guard, save the occasional exclamations of rage which burst from the lips of the prisoners. Indeed, there was no occasion for so much caution on the part of any person, as the roar of the waves and the howling of the winds would have deadened any ordinary sound. But extreme cautiousness is characteristic of the Indian ; hence, an observer would naturally have supposed this person so stealthily approaching to be one. At all events, it was easily decided that, whoever it might be, it was not one who belonged to that vicinity.

The figure emerged from the brake and sprang lightly to the side of MacDonald. The early part of the night was very cloudy, but although the wind still blew a gale, the clouds at this moment were broken, and the moon

shone forth brightly. MacDonald was soon free, and, in a whisper, said to his deliverer :—

“ You cannot go farther. The space between us and him is too open, and the moon is shining too brightly. You would be detected by the guard, and instantly shot.”

“ Only two. See ! Me fire !” The speaker raised his rifle.

“ No. There are others on the fort, within range, and we could not escape.” At this moment one of the guards asked :—

“ Who is there ?” At the same time he advanced toward the spot, as if apprehensive that all was not right.

“ Where is the canoe ?” quickly asked MacDonald.

“ Up there !” answered the savage, pointing to the brake, above.

“ We cannot reach it and must swim for the other side,” pointing over the river.

“ Ugh ! Sharks !”

The coast of Florida is noted for the large number of sharks that are there to be found at almost all seasons of the year. Indeed, it is almost certain death for any person to enter the water, unless it be in the coldest months, when they proceed further into the depths of the bay. The Indians have a mortal terror of this monster—more so than of the alligator, which infests the shallower lagoons and swamp lakes. But no time was to be lost. The guard was but a few feet from them. The renegade seized the rifle from the savage, and buried its contents in the breast of the approaching soldier, who fell back without so much as a groan. MacDonald then sprung into the water, followed by the Indian, and both struck out for the opposite shore, with the skill of expert swimmers.

Of course, the report of the rifle gave the alarm, and three or four shots were fired after the two men faintly seen in the water, but to no purpose. The garrison was soon aroused, and a body of men came rushing to the spot where the murder had been committed. Matters were soon explained, so far as the facts could be known. It was found that the other prisoner was still secure. He was at once taken before the colonel.

"Villain!" exclaimed Twiggs, "you have murdered one of my men."

"I have not," was the sharp response. "I am no murderer!" He spoke like a Roman, in dignity and purity of speech.

"Your companion in villany did so."

"With that I have nothing to do."

"You have. It is all by your infernal treachery."

"You should leave the country of the Floridas. You have no right here."

"How was MacDonald released?"

"You had better ask him."

"Lieutenant Judson, take that fellow out and lash him till he confesses all that he knows about this foul murder. We will learn what it means."

"Colonel Twiggs," exclaimed the prisoner, in a loud and commanding voice, which startled, or at least surprised that officer, "listen to me. You dare not condemn me to the lash! You have already tied me to a tree. This indignity was never placed upon me by mortal man before, and it shall not go unavenged now." There was an air about the speaker which astonished all who heard him. His eyes flashed with an unnatural light, and his powerful breast heaved with terrible excitement. He drew a knife from concealment, and then continued:—

"And you have tied me to a tree! Who are you? Why, simply an officer in the service of the United States Government—in the pay of my oppressor. And do you know who I am I will tell you. I am the King of Florida! And yet, you dare tie me to a tree! Down upon your knees, sir! Ask my pardon."

Of course, there was no move of this description, and the speaker went on:—

"Down upon your knees, sir! You will not? Then I will tell you something more. These lands are mine—all mine! This very fort and settlement stand upon my property. I have tolerated you, and permitted you to remain here, even when my warriors and chiefs have opposed it. I have endeavoured to prevent outrages, and have punished all those I detected in committing them. I came here for the purpose of renewing my treaty with you; but now, I will not do it. I will never trust you. You tied me, the King of Florida, to a tree, and I will avenge it. Before the sun shines I will lay your settlement in ashes. Remember that, Colonel Twiggs!"

With these words, the savage turned and walked deliberately away. Twiggs stood and gazed after him like one thunderstruck. For some moments he did not utter a word, and then, as if speaking to himself, he said:—

"So that is the famous Billy Bowlegs, the chief of the Seminoles! Strange I did not know him!"

"Is it your intention that he should escape?" asked an officer.

"Certainly not. Let him be arrested at once."

A guard started in pursuit, but it was too late. The chief was nowhere to be found.

"He will keep his word, colonel, with regard to the

burning of this settlement, unless the greatest care is taken to prevent it at once. He will act with celerity, you may rest assured."

"Oh! I have no fears of that. It is for those who reside in the interior that I fear—those who have not the protection of our arms."

"I think you have no occasion for that. Billy is high-minded—that is, for an Indian—and he will direct his vengeance directly against us. That is his way—to strike the strongest."

"I hope it will prove so."

"I have not a doubt of it. Did you not observe the look he gave MacDonald, when he was speaking of the manaic girl and her child?"

"I did; but I presumed it was a caution to say no more."

"I thought it so myself, at that time. But had I known it was the chief, I should have understood it differently."

"What do you suppose it meant?"

"Well, colonel, I think Billy knew nothing of the circumstances connected with Jessie Loveday, and that he would not, for a moment, protect MacDonald in any of his schemes of villany. I further believe that he will drive him from the tribe, and restore the girl to her father, could he but understand all the circumstances."

"God grant that he may do so!" exclaimed the old man, who had been listening attentively. "But will not his anger, or his desire for revenge, prevent this now?"

"It is an unfortunate occurrence; still, as I said before, he will direct his vengeance against this settlement."

"But he must be aware that I was the one who caused his arrest."

"No, father Loveday, it was not his arrest that you sought, but that of MacDonald. Billy will understand this, and, I think, fully appreciate your feelings. Look, colonel; you see that he has commenced his work already!"

A stream of fire was seen darting through the air, from the opposite side of the river. It made a beautiful arch in the heavens, and then fell close at the feet of Twiggs. He picked it up, and, after an instant of examination, exclaimed:—

"It is an arrow. Its head is wrapped with light moss, saturated with turpentine and gum"—words scarcely spoken when the whole air appeared to be filled with the flaming messengers. Many of them struck the roofs of the adjoining cabins, some of which were thatched with straw or sea-grass. The best of them were covered only with light pine shingles, and, in less time than it takes to write it, a hundred sheets of flame darted up from the buildings.

"Quick!" cried the colonel, "to the guns of the fort. Pour a shower of canister into the timber across the river. Judson, take a hundred men, and proceed to the river. Give them a dozen rounds, and more if required. Cook, take another hundred, and assist in subduing the flames."

These commands were rapidly executed. The guns of the fort belched forth their deadly messengers, while the ringing reports of the rifles and muskets told of hot work beyond. In the meantime, the flames crackled and roared, and, as the wind was high, they swept from house to house in maddening fury, resisting the combined efforts of citizens and soldiers to check them.

Morning at length dawned, and the sun shone upon a sad picture. The little settlement was in ashes, while

many a sad mother, with her weeping children clinging to her side in fear and wonder, gazed upon their ruined homes and prospects. Here and there were ghastly forms of those who had seen the sun's last setting, but would never gaze upon it again. The arrow and the rifle of the savage had done a deadly work.

With the coming light the enemy had disappeared. A council of war was called by the commander. In a brief time, a dozen officers were assembled in the fort. It was determined that a pursuit could not be commenced until the arrival of Colonel Taylor's men, as it would be a futile attempt, with so small a band, to pierce the enemy's country.

The old man, Mr. Loveday, sat but a short distance from the council, awaiting its decision. Upon his face were pictured the emotions which were agitating his soul. Now it was flushed with a crimson hue, as one would advocate an immediate pursuit, and then a deathly pallor would overspread it, as another opposed the same, denouncing it as madness.

The council ended. All had been silent for several moments. A sob and a stifled moan from the old man drew the attention of those around. As they gazed upon him, many a soldier's eye was filled with tears. At this moment Lieutenant Judson arose as if to speak, but he was interrupted by the entrance of a strange-looking person, who advanced, hat in hand, toward the table where the colonel was seated. Every one turned their eyes upon him, and evidently awaited his words, as he had already made three or four efforts to speak. Finally, as he did not succeed, the commander asked in an encouraging voice:—

“ Well, my good man, what is your will ? ”

After bowing half-a-dozen times, in the most awkward manner, the new-comer pointed to father Loveday.

"Oh! you know the old gentleman?" said the colonel.

The man struck his own breast two or three violent blows, and then wiped one of his eyes with the back of his hand. But a glance revealed the fact that he had but one eye, the other being entirely sightless and nearly closed. He then said:—

"Mayhap I do, yer 'onor. There's somethin' in here as tells one-eyed Bob how he ought to know him!" And one-eyed Bob, as he termed himself, gave his breast two or three more violent thumps, as if to repress the emotion surging within him.

"So, your name is Robert, is it?" asked Twiggs.

"No, yer 'onor. Bob, one-eyed Bob; that's it, an' nothin' else."

"Have you no other appellation?"

"Any what, yer 'onor?"

"Any other name."

"Oh, yes, yer 'onor. Bob Bradley, that's it, an' nothin' else."

"Where do you reside, Mr. Bradley?" Bob scratched his head, looked confused, and then simply exclaimed:—

"Eh?"

"Shall I call you Bob?"

"Yes, yer 'onor; that's as how folks alers calls me, an' I don't take ter any other handle."

"Well, Bob, where do you reside—or rather live!"

"Oh, I live just back a-piece, on the river. I'm a kind o' hunter generally. Me an' my wife Nancy, an' my little blind gal Blanche—please yer 'onor, my wife is precious eddicated, an' she got that name out on a book and would call her so, although I told her we had better

name her Polly. But, howsomever and notwithstandin', if the gal is blind an' got an outlandish name, she's as good an' obedient as ever yer 'onor would wish to meet with; that she is, an' nothin' else."

"Is she safe at home?" asked father Loveday, as he started to his feet.

"Safe! Yes, sir! She's safe with Nancy, an' I'd like to see the rascal, white, black, or red, as would lay the weight of his finger on her; that I would, an' nothin' else."

"Watch over her, sir. You don't know what it is to lose a child. Watch her, I say!" and the old man's eyes gleamed with tears.

"Well, Bob," continued Twiggs, "what is your business here?"

"Why, ye see, yer 'onor, I heard the shootin' this mornin', an' I see'd the fire, and I says to Nancy that somethin' was up at the settlement, an' I'd go rite off to see what it was. So I started an' met a party of reds. I knew it was them as did the work. So I watched 'em. They are goin' back to the lake, but they don't go by the road. I know every inch of the woods, an' so I came to say, that if yer 'onor is goin' to chase 'em up, I'm yer man on the trail, an' nothin' else."

"Thank you, Bob; but we have determined not to follow until reinforcements arrive."

"So I heerd at the door, an' I'll tell ye what I want; that is, a lot of powder an' lead. I've got a'most out. An' the reason why I want it is, I'm going to foller them reds up; an' what's more, I'm goin' in fur that old man's daughter, or my Nancy won't have a lovin' husband, an' nothin' else."

"It is just what I was about to propose," exclaimed Judson. "In the confusion this morning the Indian

who was confined in the guard-room escaped. He is aware of our intention to follow as soon as possible. Besides, I think MacDonald will remove the girl to some place of concealment, as I am satisfied that the chief will now interfere with the scoundrel's plans. If you will let me have three men, I will undertake to see that Jessie Loveday is not removed to any place where she cannot be found."

"It will be a great risk, Lieutenant Judson."

"I think not. I shall avoid the main body of the Indians. I think we will only have MacDonald and a few of his personal friends to encounter. I shall undertake nothing rash, but wait the approach of yourself and men at Lake Kissimmee after my purpose is accomplished. If, as I fear will be the case, MacDonald should remove her, she might never again be seen."

"As you please. Select your men. It is a mission of mercy which I have no wish to thwart, and I trust, for the old man's sake, you will be successful. Her rescue must now be one of our leading objects."

"You will go with me, Bob?"

"Yes; and there is Charley Morris, as likely a boy as ever walked, will go with us too. Poor Charley, he's 'most broke his heart since Jessie was stole away."

"Sergeant Cook and Arthur Allen are the others I shall select. Will you go with me?"

"Most willingly," was the reply, as the men stepped forth.

It was arranged that the forces should set out as soon as the expected reinforcements arrived, and that the first party should notify the troops in case it should be necessary to lay out a different programme from the one already arranged. Loveday was to accompany the army.

With a thousand blessings upon their heads, our friends took their departure in pursuit of the foe, and for the rescue of the innocent.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLIND CAPTIVE.

MACDONALD and his rescuer soon reached a point of safety. Quickly as possible, they proceeded to the spot where the band was concealed, and communicated to them the condition of affairs. The savages manifested a disposition to rush upon the settlement at once, and it was difficult for MacDonald to hold them in restraint. They proceeded to the bank of the river which separated them from the settlement, and there seated themselves, silently and sullenly looking over the water.

It was not long, however, ere they heard a splashing in the water, and the chief sprung to their side.

"Ah!" he yelled, "you are here in good time. Level those white dogs' cabins to the ground!"

The order was understood, and received with a wild whoop. It was a work of pleasure to them, which long since would have been accomplished had it not been for the restraints put upon them by their chief.

It is strange how such rude and bloodthirsty men can be controlled by a single word, when it comes from their acknowledged head. And never was there a chieftain of the red man who held a more complete control over his tribe than did Billy Bowlegs, of the Seminoles. And this man sat gazing upon the devastating flame, while a malicious, almost a demoniac, smile lighted up his face. It soon, however, became necessary for them to seek the shelter of the trees, as the shot from the fort, and the

musketry, began to pour in upon them with telling effect. A dozen had been slain or wounded, when Billy ordered a retreat, which was pushed forward until the party arrived at the head of Kissimmee Lake, the journey to which was accomplished in three days.

Here a pause was made. Camp-fires were built, and, as the darkness approached, the savages prostrated themselves upon the ground to sleep. The chief sat gazing into the water, watching the shadow of the fleecy clouds, the moon, the stars, and the red flame of the camp-fires, as they were mirrored in the silvery waters of the lake. Long appeared to be his reverie. At length he said, as if speaking to himself:—

“ Nothing but the red flame is before my eyes. If I look at a bright star, it hides its face behind a cloud, as if it shrunk from my gaze. But that red glare—the clouds do not conceal that—it will shine through! But it was his fault. I went to treat of peace, and he bound me. This I will not submit to from mortal man. I feel strangely. My heart appears so big, and it aches! I am thinking of her to-night, and this I must not do. Oh! how vividly does the time come back to me when I was among the civilised, and when a wife used to greet me upon my return from my daily toil. Oh! that sweet face! It sometimes appears to form in those shining clouds, and smile upon me from the lake’s reflection. Alas! the curse of being a half-breed! Had it not been for this, the white man never could have torn my loved and once loving wife from my heart and home. But she and the child, which I never saw, are both gone now. For years I have borne this torture of the heart, and I have felt some satisfaction in revenge. But, oh! how small it now appears to me! Revenge! And upon

whom? Those who are innocent! My soul sickens at the thought. And yet I am now bound to this savage race—my destiny is linked to their own, and I must not murmur. One thing I can do, however; I had forgotten it. That old man—his face haunts me. On-yit-ha," he exclaimed, as he roused a sleeper near him, "where is Black Jim?" The question was repeated, as the savage started up, and indicated by a movement that the person sought was to be found near the fire which was burning a little apart from the others, and behind a thick growth of underbrush. Billy walked in that direction, but paused, just as he reached a point where he could hear all the conversation which was taking place. The sound of voices commanded his attention:—

"Will not my father come to-night?" asked a soft, sweet voice.

"Not to-night, girl. Don't trouble me."

"Don't trouble you! You speak very strangely to me to-night, dear Edward. Your voice does not sound as it did when you first told me that you loved me."

"When was that?"

"When was that? Oh, dear Edward, your fatigue has made you ill and forgetful. Why, how many times you have spoken of meeting my father and myself at the fort, and of the impression my helpless condition and my beauty, as you termed it, made upon you. And then, dear Edward, that lovely—you said it was lovely—summer night, when you sat beside me upon the mossy bank, and described the scenery around, just as you saw it. And, better than all, you described your own face to me. Oh! how that dear image has been impressed upon me. It was then you told me you would not be ashamed to make me your wife, and take me into the great world. Oh!

how your words have been cherished ! I should be perfectly happy if I could only see you !” An exclamation was heard by MacDonald, at that moment. He sprung to his feet, and gazed earnestly around ; but hearing nothing further, he again seated himself.

“ When will we be to the end of our journey, Edward !”

“ Not for a week yet. But be quiet. I wish to sleep.”

“ You are deceiving me. You have spoken to me but a few times for the last few days, and then only in a whisper. You said caution was necessary, because the Indians were near. But now that you speak in a loud tone of voice, I know that it is not the voice of Edward.”

“ Well, you are right—I am not Edward !”

“ Who are you, then ?”

“ I am called Black Jim.”

“ Oh ! that dreadful man !” cried the poor girl. “ And why have you brought me here ?”

“ Well, if you must know the truth of the matter, and I suppose I shall be obliged to tell you some time, I took you to spite your Edward, of whom you think so much, and whom I hate.”

The poor creature sat silent for an instant, and then said :—

“ Heaven will not permit this outrage to go unpunished.”

“ No ! heaven will not permit it !” These words were spoken by the chief, as he entered the enclosure.

“ What do you mean ?” cried MacDonald, starting to his feet, and turning pale.

“ That you are a devil incarnate !”

“ You dare not interfere with me.”

“ Little daring there will be about it. What are you doing with that girl ?”

"Nothing."

"Why is she here?"

"She is my captive. I have taken her, and propose to make here my squaw; and, by the laws of our tribe, you dare not prevent me."

"I shall make the effort, at least."

The chief took the girl by the hand, and, in a gentle manner, asked her the particulars of her parents, her home, and capture. Of the latter she knew nothing, further than the fact that she had been met near her own home, by a person whom she supposed to be Lieutenant Judson, who informed her that the army was to move to the lake, that her father had already gone there, and that her mother was a captive, but would be rescued.

"Is it your purpose to convey this blind girl into the Everglades?"

"It is," replied the hardened man.

"And the poor maniac, and her child?"

"You may have them, if you like!"

"Yes, I will have them, for the purpose of returning them to the poor old man we saw at the fort. And that is not all. I will protect this child."

"I will appeal to the tribe.

"Call them. We will have their decision now."

"No, not until all the tribe are together can the decision be made. This is a law you dare not break."

There was some truth in this. Billy had interfered on several occasions of the kind, and, on that account, considerable dissatisfaction was felt. And, in many other things, the chief had opposed the savage appetites of his men, and he felt that opposition to any regularly established usage, with such a man as MacDonald to advocate his own cause, his chance of success was small. And yet

he determined to save the two poor creatures whom Mac Donald held in his personal power.

CHAPTER V.

MYSTERIES.

THE party who were to start in pursuit of the savages, or rather to watch their movements, first threw aside their uniforms, and adopted the dress of hunters. This done, they proceeded on their way. They were joined by Charley Morris in a short time after leaving the fort. He was a young man of more than ordinary manly beauty, but his pale, sad face gave evidence of a heart ill at ease. He was saluted cordially by the party, each of whom had frequently met him in the forest, and at the settlement.

Lieutenant Judson had the command, or rather the direction, of the party, while Bob Bradley was to act as guide. The former suggested that Bob should pass his own dwelling in order to take leave of his family, as he might possibly be absent a long time. Old Bob winked, looked very knowing, and said :—

“ I reckon as how I ain’t the only one as wants to see the women-folks. Oh ! you needn’t blush, Mr. Lieutenant. That gal is worth loving, if she is blind. But, I’ll tell ye what it is. Before ye get hitched, I’ve got to tell ye a secret about her.

“ Can’t ye tell me now, Bob ?”

“ No, sir, and for the best reason in the world.”

“ What is your reason ?”

“ You wouldn’t believe me if I should tell you.”

“ Yes, I would.”

“ Wal, then, the reason is just because there is one

woman in the world who can keep a secret, an' nothin' else." The entire party laughed at this, and Judson said :—

"I don't understand you yet, Bob."

"Well, then, it's because I don't know it myself?"

"Then how can you tell me?"

"Oh, my wi—Nancy has got it, and she says she will tell it to me at the right time; and I know she will, for she always tells the truth. And she says you have got to know it."

"Then you have no idea what it is?"

"Oh, yes, I have some idea, and that's about all. But stop!" The speaker started back, and the crimson mounted to his features, as he gazed through the forest.

"What is the matter, Bob?" asked Judson.

"Don't you see nothing there?" The hunter pointed forward.

"I see nothing."

"Injuns!"

"Are there Indians ahead?"

"They have been there, at my cabin. Don't you see it is in flames?" Without further words Bradley bounded forward, followed by his friends.

It was but a few moments before they arrived full in sight of the burning dwelling. Bradley had already reached it, and was bending over the prostrate form of a female, who was stretched upon the turf, a short distance from the flaming mass. He was beating his breast and moaning in the most pitiful manner.

Judson, at a glance, saw that it was the mother of Blanche, and it was painfully evident that she would live but a few moments longer. His next thought was of his own blind girl. He searched around, calling

loudly upon her name, but there was no response save the dead echo which came back through the forest. He now heard his name called, and he hastened to the dying woman and knelt beside her. He saw that the wound was upon the neck, and that she was sinking from loss of blood. She could speak with difficulty, and turning to Judson, she said :—

“ You love my poor child, don’t you ? ”

“ Oh ! God knows my heart, I love her. My present agony attests this. But, where is she ? ” The dying mother pointed in the direction of the lake.

“ In the hands of the Indians ? ”

“ Worse ! ”

“ Not dead ? ”

“ No. She is in the hands of James MacDonald. ”

“ But she shall be rescued ; I swear it ! ” cried Judson, in frantic tones.

“ She wishes to speak further to you, lieutenant, ” said Morris, as he called his attention to a sign from her.

“ Raise me. I cannot breathe ! ” Old Bradley raised her in his arms, and placed her in a sitting posture, and she continued :—

“ Judson, under a slab of granite by the side of the oak-tree yonder, you will find a box. It contains a secret which you must learn before you wed my child. And, oh ! I beg of you not to discard her. She is pure and innocent. I am—oh ! ” and the poor mother fell back a corpse.

It was some moments before a word was spoken. But at length Judson exclaimed :—

“ Our presence here can avail little now. We must get promptly. Let us send the body to the fort for interment, and then continue our journey. ”

"No," exclaimed Bradley. "She wanted to be buried by the side of the river."

"Well, let it be so." In a short time the rude burial was over, and the party were about to set forward.

"You forget the box, lieutenant," said Morris.

"I did forget it. But no matter; another time will do as well."

"But you may never visit this spot again. We are now bent upon a desperate undertaking, in which it is not impossible you might lose your life. And perhaps this secret confided to you by the dying woman may be for the future welfare of Blanche, and should not be given to another except through you."

"True; I will secure the box." This was soon done. Judson opened it, and found that it contained nothing but a carefully-folded paper. He placed this in his breast, without so much as even glancing at its contents.

"Would it not be well to read it now?" asked Morris.

"No. There is an endorsement upon it, to the effect that the secret is only for me; and I have no desire to learn the contents of the paper until I can secure the safety of her to whom the paper refers. Oh! Blanche, poor child—poor blind bird, what will be her fate?" Judson bowed his head, while his frame trembled with the intensity of his feelings. In a moment he said:—

"Excuse me, Morris. Do not think I am childish."

"No. You feel as becomes a noble heart."

"And yet I can but cry like a baby."

"No. Say rather that you weep like a man."

"As you please to term it. Morris, you cannot dream how I love that poor blind girl. To me she is the embodiment of all that is lovely and pure; aye, it seems to me that heaven never painted so fair, or formed so gentle

a being. Why, I have sat beside her for hours listening to her voice, until lost in reverie, enchanted by its tones, I have dreamed a thousand angels were warbling their heavenly anthems by my side. And when, with such confiding fondness, she would rest her head upon my breast, the joy that filled my heart was perfect, and I inwardly thanked Heaven for sending me such a prize. Is it strange to you that a soldier could thus love?"

"No. She is a being to love. But have you never felt regrets with regard to her great misfortune?"

"You refer to her loss of sight?"

"Of course."

"The only regret I ever felt was on her own account. If she had the blessings of sight, it is true she would enjoy a greater degree of pleasure in gazing upon the beauties of life, but it might divide the heart. I think she loves me better, and is much happier in that love, from the fact that she is entirely dependent upon that love for her happiness."

"No doubt this is true to some extent. But do you know in what manner she became deprived of her sight?"

"I do not. This, also, is a secret I am to learn some day."

"Well, Judson, you have much cause for anxiety—great anxiety; but your case is not altogether hopeless, like my own."

"You refer to Jessie Loveday?"

"Yes, I think I love her as truly as mortal can love. When she was stolen from me it almost killed me. Night and day I passed in searching for her, but to no purpose. I became satisfied, however, that she was a prisoner in the Everglades. A hundred times have I made a circuit of Lake Kissimmee, calling upon her name, even when

my own judgment told me she could not be near. But it was upon that lake I last saw her, and it appeared to me like an enchanted place. It almost maddened me as I gazed upon each familiar spot. Here was the mossy bank beneath the great oak where we had so often sat, but she was not there! Here was the rippling streamlet beside which we had so often wandered, listening to its soft music, which now appeared to me like her funeral dirge. Here was her mother's grave, over which we knelt, asking that mother's pure spirit to listen to us and bless us, as we spoke of endless love, and plighted, each to the other, our first vows. But Jessie was not with me, and, in my soul's anguish, I almost wished that she was lying beneath the sod, and I beside her!"

"She has been absent nearly a year. Have you never received the slightest information of her?"

"Never. I have passed up and down the river a dozen times, and into Lake Okeechobee, which I have also explored in every part. I also penetrated the Everglades until I came upon the Indian stronghold."

"And you saw nothing—no signs of Jessie?"

"No. But I saw that which almost froze my blood within me."

"What was it?"

"I will tell you—that is, so far as I know. I found great difficulty in forcing my way through the swamps. There were numerous narrow, well-beaten paths. But these it was necessary for me to avoid, as there were frequent parties of Indians passing from their stronghold to the lake and back again. In the more marshy places I encountered alligators and poisonous reptiles; but it was for her I love better than life that I was toiling, and

I thought not of danger. I felt my worst enemy to be the savage who had stolen my Jessie."

"Do you not know that the abductor was a white man?"

"Yes; the renegade, Black Jim. I know it well. I never saw him but once, but his image is fixed as with a brand of fire upon my memory, and I feel that we shall some day meet."

"Well, go on with your narrative."

"At length, bursting through a wall of brake, I came suddenly in sight of the Indian village. It was a strange place. Surrounding a comparatively open space, or sparsely-timbered lawn, were rows of wigwams, in large numbers, and various in size and pattern. Some of them were formed of blankets or skins, others of cane and young saplings, while others, still, were built of logs, and were quite large, running at angles, with a length perhaps of forty feet, and a height of eight or ten. These buildings were mostly ranged at the outer edge of the circle, and appeared to be intended for the double purpose of dwellings and defensive works. At the western portion of the settlement was situated what, to me, appeared to be a freak of nature. It was a range of sharp, ragged cliffs, over which I could plainly see, and distinctly hear, the living streams of water, as they came dashing over the sides of this elevation.

"To this place I bent my steps, and ascended to the highest peak. It was, indeed, a wild spot. The range of hills, which were very much broken, extended several miles toward the west. Below me, and all around, lay the monotonous Everglades, and far beyond I could see the deep blue of the ocean. At a little distance was the lake, and the winding river, like a thread of silver, pre-

seemingly a picture long to be remembered. But at the base of this ridge, directly at my feet, my greatest interest was centred. Here I could see the rude wigwams, the smoke curling up, as if to overcast and eclipse some of this rare beauty. It seemed to settle around my soul, for the gloom there was of the densest kind. Was it possible, thought I, that she—my Jessie—was a prisoner there? And would some kind spirit whisper to her that I was near? My heart did not fail me, though, for a moment, my strength did, and I sunk to the earth. I soon recovered. Hope nerved me, and I determined to continue my search, fully and unflinchingly.

"I commenced my descent of the hill, or rather series of rocky ledges. I had proceeded, perhaps, two hundred yards, when I found myself upon a kind of flat, which overlooked the village below. At a glance, I discovered that the spot contained several wigwams, and one large log-cabin, similar in build to those below. I saw a human figure seated near this latter building, with the head bent low, resting upon the hands. I instantly sprung behind a jutting rock, and, as I thought, escaped observation. I then turned to look at the object, for its very appearance had excited my curiosity. As I peered over the rock, I saw that the figure had raised its head, and was gazing toward me. My very blood ran cold."

"It was a human being, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps some poor captive?"

"That is my opinion."

"Well, go on."

"I will describe it, if I can. It was indeed the form of a man; and yet unlike one. Upon his person were a few tattered and filthy rags; his hair was long, and hung in

straggling, matted knots over his shoulders; his beard was of the same ragged appearance, and his eyes so haggard, sunken, and bloodshot, that I shrunk almost in terror from their gaze. He swayed to and fro, making a kind of guttural sound, which, together with his wild appearance, convinced me that he was not only a prisoner but a maniac.

"My first impulse was to rush from my concealment, and release the captive, for such I felt he must be, as I saw that his ankles were bound with an iron fetter, and, with a chain, was attached to one of the logs forming the cabin. I did so far leave my place of concealment that the wretched man saw me, and, with a cry wild and terrible, he sprung to his feet. His chains rattled, and the sound chilled me. What strange mystery could be connected with this wretched prisoner?

"At this moment I felt a sharp twinge near my temple. An arrow glided past. I placed my hand to my head, and found that the blood had started, and was trickling down my face. Instinctively I stepped again behind the rock for protection. The man saw that I had been discovered by some of the savages, for two more arrows had fallen upon the spot where I had been standing. He asked, in a voice which thrilled me:—

"'Are you alone?'

"'I am!' I replied.

"'Then, run for your life! To remain here is madness.'

"'But I cannot leave you to suffer thus!' I cried.

"'Your stay would but tighten my chains. You have penetrated a spot never trod by a white man before, unless he was a captive. Go, bring friends—hundreds of friends. Do not pause. It will only be to murder me

and yourself. Go, and you can return as a guide. An instant more, and you are lost! Go, Charles Morris!"

"He called you by name?"

"Yes. I had already commenced a rapid retreat when I heard my own name spoken. I paused, to question the wretched man further, but down among the rocks I saw the forms of a number of the savage tribe, and I heard their yells of rage. I knew I could not contend with them for an instant, and so I darted forward. For many miles the pursuit was kept up. But at last I reached the lake, and springing into a canoe which I found upon the shore, I effected my escape."

"Have you no idea who the person was who knew you, and addressed you by your name?"

"Not the least."

"You could neither recognise the features nor the voice?"

"Neither. The appearance of the man was so utterly wretched, that I do not suppose there is a vestige of his former self left, and the voice sounded more like the echo of a clod upon a coffin-lid, than anything human."

"When did this occur?"

"Only six days since!"

"So recently?"

"Yes. I have just returned from the Everglades."

"Have you yet taken any action in the matter?"

"Yes, I have communicated all the particulars to Colonel Twiggs. I am to meet the army at Lake Kissimmee, and lead them against the savages."

"Did you see old Mr. Loveday at the fort?"

"I did. And I also learned from him that Mac Donald had actually been a prisoner at the fort, but had escaped. Oh! if I could have met him there!"

within the circle of the ruined settlement at this announcement. Their situation had been considered dangerous for some time past, and, after the disaster of that morning, nothing could be more welcome than reinforcements and fresh supplies.

And many there were who were eager to march against the foe. With the additional force they were to receive, success could but crown the attempt which was to be made to dislodge the implacable, relentless savages.

Soon the vessels bearing the fresh troops were moored beside the fort pier, and the disembarkation commenced, amid the cheering of the soldiers as well as citizens. Matters were soon explained. It required but a few hours to get everything in readiness for a move. By noon the troops who were to participate in the expedition were drawn up in line. There were at least five hundred of them—brave, hardy-looking men as ever fought beneath the starry flag. And this body of men were to be commanded, in their hazardous undertaking, by Colonel Zachary Taylor. Twiggs was to remain still in command of the fort, which retained a garrison sufficiently strong to hold it.

Taylor and Twiggs! What the different history of these men! We find the former leading a devoted band amid the wilds of Florida, against a wily savage and his fierce warriors, in 1840. In 1846-7 he again heads a brave army in Mexico, and, knowing "no such word as surrender," conquers a peace. And again, in 1849, he heads a mighty nation, its chosen chief. Honoured he lived—beloved he died—his memory enshrined in millions of patriotic hearts, living "when marble monuments decay." God send us such another man, when the time of need comes! And yet, I fear, "we shall not look upon

his like again"—so simple, and yet so great; so firm, and yet so mild—so severe, and yet so generous.

But the other! Sympathy would drop a tear—Charity would drop the veil—Justice, tempered with mercy, will permit the misguided and his faults to rest together, side by side, within the grave—whither he passed just in time to save his name from the madness of having drawn his sword against his honoured flag.

Colonel Taylor learned all the particulars with regard to the stronghold of the enemy in the Everglades, and was informed that he would be joined by Charles Morris at the head of the lake, who would act as a guide. The waggon train was in readiness, and among other things were a number of boats, which were to be used by a portion of the army for crossing the lakes and descending the river, and for the transportation of supplies, as this could not well be done by the train, further than the road had already been opened.

It was about two o'clock when the little army took up its march.

Just as the sun was sinking, on the third day, the scouts, which were always in the advance, returned, and reported a body of savages, evidently encamped for the night, on the margin of the lake. They appeared to be entirely at their ease, and unconscious of danger. The army was immediately halted, and preparation made for a surprise.

"Have they canoes on the lake?" asked the commander.

"I could not tell. I simply saw their camp-fires, and one or two sleeping Indians, when I returned to warn you, lest the rumbling of the baggage-waggons should alarm them."

"You did well. I will myself go forward and reconnoiter."

"No use in that, yer 'onor," exclaimed old Bob, who came up at this moment. "I've got the soundin's right as a trivet, and ef you'll let me giv' ye a little bit of directions, ye can trap the whole crew, just as slick as ever a cat caught a mouse."

"Who are you?" asked the colonel.

"Only one-eyed Bob. Reckon Colonel Twiggs spoke to you 'bout me."

"Yes, I recollect. Well, what is your plan?"

"Well, jest send a hundred of the boys down the lake about a mile, another hundred up the lake, about the same distance. Then take another hundred an' let them carry them boats only a little distance, and I'll show them where there's a small stream that empties into the lake. Let 'em run down it, embark, an' cut off the retreat by the water. Then we will all advance at once, and the reds will find themselves cut off on all sides."

"How many of the savages are there?"

"I should say not over sixty at the most."

"Your plan is a good one, and shall be carried out. You may accompany the party with the boats."

"Yes, colonel. But there's one thing I wish you would do."

"What is that, my friend?"

"Give orders to the men not to fire, without they are absolutely compelled to do so."

"Why do you make this request?"

"Because my child—my poor little blind Blanche—is a prisoner with them, and I fear you might injure her."

"It shall be as you wish." The commander now gave the necessary instructions, and the three parties set off.

while a fourth remained behind ready to advance at the proper time. It was agreed, that in one hour the encircling parties should begin to concentrate, as this would be sufficient time for each one to reach the desired position.

Father Loveday remained with the colonel's party. He had made inquiry of Bob with regard to Lieutenant Judson, Charles Morris, and their friends, and learned that they had all separated as they neared the lake, and were probably near at hand.

The appointed time for the advance arrived. Cautiously the troops moved forward from their various points. The movements were so slow that nearly another hour elapsed before the rear party came in sight of the camp-fires. As they drew near, they saw that the savages had already been alarmed by the approach of the boats upon the lake, and were crouching behind the trees, watching them. They did not see that they were being closed in upon to the right, left, and rear, so intent were they upon the party in the boats.

The boats had arrived to within a distance of forty yards from the shore, when a stream of fire shot out from among the trees, followed by the sharp report of the Indian rifles. This was quite unexpected to the commander. By the clear moonlight he saw a number of his men who occupied the boats leap into the air, and then pitch headlong into the water. This was more than he could bear, and he cried out :—

“Fire upon them, men—give them one volley, and then the bayonet.” Another sheet of flame and a deafening report followed this command, and with the most unearthly yells of terror, rage, and pain, the savages turned to find themselves hemmed in upon every side. Some few

of them leaped into the water, but were soon despatched, or seized by those in the boats.

The Indians, finding themselves so closely pressed on every side by the glittering bayonets in the hands of determined men, with a few exceptions, threw down their arms in token of surrender. But those few fought with the desperation of madness, and not until they were literally hewed in pieces, or picketed with the bayonet, did they cease their frantic efforts.

During this time there had been a voice heard, high above the din of battle, urging the warriors to continue their efforts and yield only to death. But no force could stand against such odds.

When quiet was restored, the colonel advanced and asked :—

“Where is the chief?”

“He is here!” exclaimed the well-known voice of Billy Bowlegs, as he stepped from behind a large tree.

Colonel Taylor had met this chieftain before in battle, but had never been in a position to examine his features or general appearance. There was a look of astonishment upon his face as he asked :—

“Are you the celebrated Florida chief?”

“I am chief of the Seminoles. What is your will?”

“That you throw down your arms, and surrender.”

“Surrender! Me, the King of Florida, surrender? Colonel Taylor, do you see those dead bodies? They were my braves. They died fighting! They chose death rather than surrender to the usurper! The brave would not surrender! Think you the chief will not imitate their example?”

“And you will not surrender?”

“Never!”—and Billy raised his tomahawk in the air.

"Seize him," cried the colonel. A number of soldiers sprung forward to do this, but quick as thought Billy hurled his weapon at the head of the commander, and with a single bound dashed through the lines.

It proved very fortunate for the colonel that a young sapling intervened between him and the infuriated chief, for the tomahawk, striking a limb, glanced a trifle from its destined course, and fell harmless to the ground, far beyond him. The movement, too, upon the part of the savage, was so unexpected, that he had cleared the circle before any person had time even to put forth the slightest effort to prevent his escape in the jungles around them.

"Fire upon him," yelled the commander. A volley went rattling through the oaks and smaller trees. The chief was seen to spring into the air, and clasp his hand upon his side as if hurt, but he paused not, and in a moment more was lost to view. An examination of the earth in the direction he had taken, proved that he had been wounded, but to what extent no one knew.

And, indeed, it was hoped that his wound would not prove mortal, because Billy was in reality a humane chief. In case of his death, it was feared the command would fall upon MacDonald, who had much influence with the tribe. He was a merciless villain, and had exhibited the most intense hatred of the white race, of which he was himself a renegade and outcast.

A search was now made for Blanche. Loudly did poor old Bob call upon her name, but he received no answer.

"Oh, my God! If she has been shot it will complete my misery," said the old man, as he searched around. But not a trace of her or of MacDonald could

be found. It was not likely that they would separate from the main party—certainly not before they reached the lake. It not, they could not be far distant. He proceeded to the margin of the waters, and called in his loudest tones. Once he thought he heard a faint echo borne upon the breeze; but his repeated calls failed to elicit anything definite.

At length he returned to the party, who were evidently preparing for a night's rest.

"Perhaps," said the old man to the commander, "there are some of the Indians who can speak English, and may give us some information." Such a one was soon found.

"Where is Black MacDonald?" asked the colonel of On-yit-ha, or Night-hawk.

"Ugh! there." The savage pointed to the spot where the renegade and his captive had been seated when interrupted by the approach of the chief. An examination was made at once. There were the delicate footprints, and the fire beside which they had been seated was yet burning. Poor Blanche! She had been so nearly rescued, and yet was a prisoner. It was a torturing thought, and agony was plainly written upon old Bradley's face. The rude soldiers around were affected deeply by the old man's sorrow.

The two soldiers who had accompanied the advance party now came up, having been attracted by the firing.

"Have you seen Lieutenant Judson, or Charles Morris?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"Not since we parted at twilight."

"They went down the lake, did they not?"

"Yes."

"Both together?"

"No; Judson took a small canoe, but intended keeping close to the shore, while Morris was to travel by land."

"Were they to return here?"

"Yes, at daylight, if they found nothing."

"Well, there is yet hope; for I know that Judson will put forth every effort for the rescue of my child. But to-morrow will bring news of them, and I doubt not more work. So we will rest to-night."

The bivouac was soon made, and, ere long, the tired troops slept. But old Bob did not. His mind was too much disturbed, and his heart too full, to permit forgetfulness in slumber; and so the night passed—each hour was an hour of sweet repose to the sleepers; but to the distressed old man each minute was but sixty seconds of torture.

CHAPTER VII.

"HERE, FATHER!"

AFTER our friends had left the grave of the murdered woman, they pushed rapidly forward toward the lake, only pausing for rest and refreshments. It was late in the afternoon of the third day, when old Bob announced that they were only a short distance from the lake. A consultation was held. It was not even supposed that this party could effect a rescue. Their intention was to track the foe, and furnish such information as would enable the troops to make a successful attack when they came up.

There could scarcely be any danger anticipated by the savages; still, it was thought that, with their usual precaution, they would be likely to encamp in some retired

spot. It was, therefore, determined to wait until darkness should set in, and then commence the search.

Judson and Morris took a lower route, followed by one of the soldiers, while old Bob and the other soldier took the upper one. In a short time they reached the lake. By chance Judson found a canoe. He was satisfied, by the model of the same, that it belonged to some settler, and not to any of the Indians. He sprung into it, saying:—

“I will push out a short distance, and see if there are any camp-fires visible. Wait here a moment, until I return.”

In a short time the boat glided noiselessly back to the land, and Judson said:—

“A mile above, and about two miles below, there are fires.”

“Those above are most likely to be the ones we want.

“Why so?”

“Because they are directly in the path taken by the savages.”

“I think differently. The one above is too near the lake. They are fishermen. That down, is a little distance back in the forest, and not so distinct.”

“At all events, Bob is in that direction, and will attend to them. We will go below. What is your plan?”

“Let the soldier join Bob above. I will pull carefully along the margin of the lake, while you may keep in the timber. If we should be separated, remember, we must meet in two or three hours on the road, and sooner, if we get the information we want; for if Colonel Taylor arrived the day we left, as they expected, he will be at the lake by midnight, if not before.”

"Well, go on ; but look out for yourself ; for the moon is shining brightly, and any person can see a long distance upon the water—more especially those savages, with their practised eyes."

"Remember the meeting." And Judson left the shore.

He pulled cautiously along, and arrived at a point opposite the lower fire. He soon discovered what it was. A large stream of water here emptied into the lake. A fire was burning upon its bank, and some men and women were engaged in fishing. After becoming fully convinced that they were friends, he approached. They were not a little startled when they heard the splash of oars and saw the approaching canoe. But they were reassured as they discovered there was but one person, a white man, in it. Judson pulled close to the party, who eyed him a moment, and then one of them, with a laugh, said :—

"Confound it, stranger, ye e'ena' most skeered the life out on a feller."

"I was not aware of having done anything to frighten you, my friends. I simply saw you from the lake, and came up for the purpose of gleaning some information if possible."

"Confound it, wife ; he's one of them nice-spoken chaps as you sees down to the fort. Shouldn't be surprised ef he was a sojer."

"I am an officer under Colonel Taylor," replied Judson.

"Want to know ! Wal, we're right down glad to see ye. Won't ye jist step on shore and take a nip ? I've got a bottle of the rale old stingo here."

"Thank you, not to-night. I am glad to propose the toast : 'Ladies and gentlemen, your health.'"

"Akers do it at the fort," said the fisherman, with a wink and a knowing nod to those around him. Then he continued :—

"Stranger, I like you, and shall be glad to give ye good grab in the morning, for you're goin' to hang out on a peg with us to-night, I reckon."

"No, I thank you. I have work before me to-night."

"Want to know! May I ax what kind o' work you mought hev?"

"Certainly. I am upon the track of a band of Indians."

"Huntin' Injins, hey? Wal, I reckon ye ain't a duin' it all alone, be ye?"

"There are five of us who are tracking the savages. But I expect Colonel Taylor, with an army of at least five hundred men, down to join us to-night."

"Hoorah! That's the talk. Here, wife, get me my gun, for by the great lizards I'm goin' to jine 'em. A chance to hunt the varmints, in good company, don't come every day, and I'm in for a scrimmage to wipe out old scores, curse em!"

"You may be useful as a guide," replied Judson, not noticing the earnestness of the man, whose last words were uttered with terrible fierceness.

"Yis, an' ef I can't get our little Willie back, I'll hev the satisfaction of helpin' to clear 'em out, any way. Five hundred! Hoorah! Hoorah!"

"Your little Willie! What do you mean?" asked Judson.

"Wal, Gin'ral, ye see that gal, thar'? Wal, she's my wife, an', about two year ago, she had one of the cutest little cusses—a baby, I mean—looked jes' like me, didn't it, wife?—that ye ever did see. Wal, ye see, the bigger

it grew, the more store we set by the little critter. But about a year ago, a party o' the reds were goin' past here, when they picked up the boy, an' toted him off—no one knows whar'. It e'ena'most killed my wife, Sally, there; but we had to b'ar it. It war harder'n havin' our own ha'r raised."

"And you have never heard anything of the child?"

"Not a whimper. I s'pect the little thing's dead before this time. But, if I can get only one shot at—what's that?" A short distance from the spot where they were standing was heard a shot; a scream, being evidently that of a female; and a voice calling:—

"Judson! Judson!"

"Come! Quick! Follow me!" cried Edward, as he bounded into the forest.

With the speed of the wind, he ran for the spot from whence he had heard the sounds proceeding, answering the calls. One better acquainted with the Indian character would not have done this. It proved unfortunate; for, just as he broke through a thicket, he received a blow upon the head which sent him reeling and senseless to the earth.

We will return, for a few moments, to MacDonald.

After the conversation, which we have already narrated, had occurred between him and the chief, with reference to the blind girl and the maniac, the latter left the circle, fully resolved to liberate them, while the former was more than ever resolved that it should not be done.

MacDonald's daring nature loved opposition. He was quite a favourite with the tribe on account of his courage—for the savage is apt to mistake deeds of barbarism for those of heroism; and, in the present case, he did not fear

the result of the tribe's decision, whether or not he should retain the maidens, who were his lawful captives. Still, he could not but feel ill at ease. He knew the disposition of the chief, and that, when he had once resolved a thing, it was almost as good as done. He therefore determined that he would proceed at once to the stronghold.

Taking Blanche by the hand, he led her to a distant part of the camp, and arousing four of the sleepers—those who were the most devoted to him—communicated to them his intentions. At first, they grumbled at being disturbed; but the promise of a large amount of whisky had the desired effect, and they followed the renegade.

Blanche had become too much fatigued to walk, and a rude litter was formed, upon which she was carried.

"It is but three miles to the house of old Bill Silly. We can get a boat there. It is true, I would rather avoid his house, for certain reasons of my own; but it is the only way. Once in the boat, our journey will be easy the balance of the distance."

Poor Blanche, in spite of her anguish of mind, had—overcome so entirely as she was by fatigue—fallen asleep. The party kept on their way, and at length arrived near the spot where the conversation occurred between the fisherman and Judson.

Upon a sudden, they came upon Charles Morris. Neither saw the other until they were but a few feet apart. Quick as thought, Morris raised his rifle. He comprehended at a glance the condition of affairs. But he had mistaken his man. He had intended to kill MacDonald, but, fortunately for the villain, he had just relieved one of the Indians at the litter, who was walking in the advance. The savage, therefore, received the contents of Morris's rifle in his breast, and, with a groan,

fell to the earth. At the same time, Morris called loudly for Judson, whom he supposed to be near. Blanche was aroused by the shot, and gave vent to a scream of terror. But MacDonald was not to be so easily foiled. He had now only one adversary to encounter, who held an unloaded gun. A second report soon followed, and Morris fell to the ground.

These were the sounds heard by Judson, and, dashing forward, he arrived at the spot just as his friend had fallen, and himself received a blow which deprived him of consciousness.

MacDonald bent close to the face of the fallen men, and examined each. He then said, in a low tone, and with much bitterness :—

“It is Judson, as I expected, but he is only stunned by the blow. Oh! I will have rare sport. I will repay him for tying me to a tree. And this other poor devil—if I remember him rightly, he is the—or was, the lover of Jessie. I’d like to see him squirm; but he’s dead. Here, boys, take up this man, and bring him along.”

The Indians did as directed. Blanche was led forward, and the party soon stood upon the spot where Judson had met the fishermen. The latter, fearing that the savages were approaching in large numbers, had deemed it prudent to withdraw. Nothing now stood in the way of the villains.

Judson, still insensible, was placed in a boat. Blanche was also led into it. The renegade and the three remaining savages sprung in, and pulled rapidly for the middle of the lake.

“Blanche, do you hear that?” asked MacDonald.

“I hear the report of firearms,” answered the girl.

“Do you not see the flames and smoke?”

"Why do you mock me, sir? You know I cannot see!"

"Oh, yes. I had forgotten. But listen! There are three distinct volleys. Is it not a heavenly sound?"

"To me it is one of terror."

"Do you know what it means?"

"I can't even guess."

"Those sounds are from the spot we have just left. They are your friends; and, poor fools, they think to find you there."

"Why are you so cruel as to take me from them?"

"Well, if you must know, it is because I wish to be revenged upon your friends and your Mr. Judson, the soldier-swain who loves to tie those he don't fancy up to whipping-posts."

"Judson? Do you mean Edward Judson?"

"Yes; Edward Judson. Would you not love to see him?"

"I would love to hear his voice once again."

"Well, be a good girl, and you shall hear his voice in a few hours. Do you hear that voice?"

"It is calling me by name! I heard it distinctly."

"Yes. Do you recognize the tones?"

"It is my father's voice." And Blanche arose, and with all her strength answered the call. The words, "Here, father!" rung out over the water in tones of commingled despair and joy.

"It is useless," said MacDonald, with a laugh. "You will never see your father again!"

"Never hear his voice again! Never feel his fond caress again!"

"Never feel old Bob Bradley's paws again."

"And my mother?"

"She is dead, and old Bob is a widower. He is one-eyed now, sure," and the heartless wretch chuckled over his supposed witticism.

"Oh! Heaven help me," sobbed Blanche, as she sunk back into her seat.

"Blanche! Blanche!" called Judson, as he returned to half consciousness. "Blanche, where are you—where am I?"

"Oh! here, Edward, here," cried the poor girl, as she recognized the voice so dear to her, and sprung to her feet.

"Closer, Blanche! closer! I am cold. I—I—" and Judson fell back again, unconscious. The poor blind girl had tottered forward, and fell fainting upon the body of her lover.

The renegade looked on, while a smile of gratified revenge lighted up his hideous face.

Into such inhuman shape is human nature sometimes warped by men's own unrestrained passions and evil circumstances.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRONGHOLD.

WHEN the morning broke, it was clear and beautiful. Judson had recovered his reason, but was still lying prostrate and almost helpless in the bow of the boat. Blanche had been separated from her friend, and placed in the stern of the little craft, where, sobbing, she had fallen into a fitful slumber.

She saw not the bright sun. At her waking she could feel its genial glow, but the beauty of its light was for ever shut out from her. Its golden reflection in the sparkling

arms, and clung to him as if she feared some accident might again part them.

"Can you not save me, dear Edward?" she asked.
"Take me anywhere away from his presence!" she added, with a shudder.

"I hope for the best, dearest."

"Are we both prisoners?"

"Yes, Blanche."

"And in a boat upon the lake?"

"Upon the river."

"Are you hurt, Edward? You speak in a faint voice."

"I received a slight wound last night, but it is nothing serious, darling."

"Who are those bad men who have taken us captives?"

"Better not know—so say no more of them."

"Oh, let her speak," exclaimed MacDonald. "It won't hurt my feelings a bit. We all profess to be bad men according to your standard. Let her go on."

"Where are they conveying us?" asked Blanche.

"I do not know, darling; probably to some of their Everglades' retreats, where they hope no civilized foot will ever pursue them."

"And you will not leave me again, will you, Edward?"

"Not if I can help it. But do not speak further. Cling close to me, dearest, and we will hope for the best."

The current of the Kissimmund is quite rapid, running at the rate of from five to six miles an hour. This is, perhaps, somewhat singular, flowing as it does from north to south, when we take into consideration the fact that, only a few miles distant, and running at a rate of four miles per hour, from south to north, is the celebrated and unaccountable Gulf Stream, or current of the ocean.

The savages plied the oars vigorously, and, running as

they were with the river, their progress was rapid. They soon arrived at Lake Okeechobee.

To cross this body of water required the balance of the day and the night following, as their progress was less rapid than upon the river. But it was at length accomplished, and the Everglades, of which Judson had heard so much but had never seen, appeared in view.

What a multitude of conflicting emotions agitated the soul of Judson! The gentle being he so idolized was resting upon his heart in calm and holy confidence, clinging as the ivy to the oak—the tender vine to its bold protector. Her presence ever had been to him a heaven of bliss, but now it was a pain. And it became still more so because she was so confiding, he so powerless. He thought of the picture Morris had painted—of the man with hollow voice, of sunken eyes, dishevelled locks, of rags and chains. He thought of the poor maniac girl and her reputed child. Who would take her to their heart? In the bosom of poor old Father Loveday she could find a home.

The lake had been passed, and the party were about merging into the brake, when one of the savages gave vent to an exclamation of surprise, and pointed toward the north. MacDonald gazed in the direction indicated. A frown settled upon his face, and he clutched his huge knife as he muttered:—

“It is the chief, and alone!” Judson remembered the look that Billy had given MacDonald at the fort, while he had been speaking of the maniac, and, connecting this with the fact that the renegade had separated from the party, and that the chief was evidently in pursuit, it could not but inspire hope in his heart. His captor observed the smile which lighted up his face, and said:—

"Your hopes are vain, Judson. I grant you that the chief would release the captives, if he dared, for he has the heart of a woman, or a chicken. But you know the laws that govern us. You are all my captives, and no person dare interfere. If Billy should attempt it, chief as he is, he would be bound and punished. So make up your mind that no power on earth can stay me in my revenge. I have permitted that girl to remain at your side, and she can remain with you for some time to come. Do you know the reason why I do this?"

"I cannot say that I do."

"It is to render your separation the more bitter."

"Fiend! You will yet be foiled."

"You think so, do you? Well, upon my word, you have a large amount of confidence in something—I don't know what; for, as matters stand now, I don't really see much that looks like a rescue. Do you see that rocky ledge?"

"I do, plainly."

"There are a range of hills and ledges connected with that which Satan and all his imps could not take. At the base is the settlement, where the Seminoles reside. It is our stronghold, and will so remain, as long as I live to encourage the Indians to defend it."

"I know it," replied Judson. "At a level spot, or shelf, about half way up the sides, is your den. It is there that old Mr. Loveday's daughter is concealed; and another victim is chained to your door. Is it not so?"

MacDonald looked surprised, and then raised himself to his full height, gazing in the direction of the cliff. He evidently was endeavouring to ascertain if Judson could see what he had described. Satisfying himself that he could not, he asked:—

"How did you learn this, Master Soldier?"

"Oh, your stronghold and its surroundings are well known to the army, and will be taken in less than a week from this time, if I don't miss my guess. If I had my wish, it would be taken the moment your foot touches the shore."

"Indeed! A pretty friend you are—a good well-wisher!" he added, scornfully.

"Yes. You will recollect that you have now Colonel Taylor to deal with, and five hundred veteran Indian fighters. They are on your track, and will hunt you and your blood-thirsty crew to the death, as you so richly deserve."

MacDonald did not reply for a few moments, but at length said:—

"Well, let him come. Here we could meet and successfully contend with five thousand white-livered puppets of your mean Government. Let Taylor come, and maybe his scalp-lock will grace a Seminole lodge."

The stream was now becoming very narrow, running along the base of ragged rocks, some of which were overhanging in such a manner as to threaten to fall at any moment. At length the boat was moored alongside a rocky shelf, and the party disembarked. They passed along, for a distance of about twenty yards, through a narrow defile, and then emerged in a well-beaten path, which wound its way up the steep.

It was a rugged ascent, and the wounded man found much difficulty in toiling up, encumbered as he was with the blind maiden. But at length the open space, described by Morris, was reached. There were the flat, the height above, and the smoking valley below. There were the rude wigwams and the log-works. Near him was the

cabin, and, around, the huts described. Even the iron chain and the staple were in view, but nothing was seen giving the slightest indication of human life, save at the village in the valley. Far beyond, spread the lake ; but not a speck appeared upon its surface. Friends were not yet in sight. Judson sunk upon the earth, panting for breath, while Blanche seated herself by his side.

In a moment the Indians, who had accompanied Mac Donald on the journey, disappeared. The renegade turned to Judson, and asked :—

“Do you see any evidence of life around?”

“I do not. It looks like a tiger’s lair, awaiting the tiger.”

“Ha! ha! Good! You may consider yourself the tiger’s prey. Ha! ha!” Then he added: “And you think if I was absent, you would be able to escape without difficulty?”

“I see nothing to prevent me from finding my way to the river, or to the coast, if I am left free to go.”

MacDonald placed a small, peculiarly-carved bit of bone to his lips, and blew a shrill blast. In an instant, a dozen tawny forms appeared, as if coming from the face of the cliff, or from the earth below their feet.

“These are my guard,” he continued. “If you should attempt an escape in my absence, you would be instantly seized by them. You see I have my arrangements perfect, and, if you are wise, you will not attempt to foil me, or to escape. If Colonel Taylor should dare to advance upon us here, you can easily imagine what his fate would be. Our works below are almost impregnable. Here they are quite so, and, with my own guard, I could defy him and cut him in pieces, man by man, as I certainly shall do if he appears.”

"Where is the cabin of your chief?"

"Upon the second ledge you see, yonder. He never troubles me here. But I must leave you now. Remember, you are to be free from fetters so long as you make no attempt to escape. When you do this, I shall place you in chains, and give you prison fare."

"Who talks of chains?" The voice came from within the cabin. It was low and sepulchral—something frightfully hollow. At the same time, the wretched being which had been described by Morris came crawling forth. As his eyes fell upon Judson, he started to his feet with a wild cry. He gazed steadily upon him for a moment, and then, tottering forward, with a half-choking, half-sobbing sound, he stammered forth:—

"Ed—d—Edward—Judson!"

"You know me!"

"Yes! Yes!"

"Great God! who are you?"

"Frederick Loveday! your old shipmate, who you thought perished on the coast of Florida!"

The friends met as only those under the weight of such misery can meet.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAZED CAPTIVE.

MACDONALD saw the recognition, and rubbed his hands in very glee. The joy he felt was, that each one's sufferings would be the keener as he gazed upon his friend. He therefore left them.

Explanations were soon made. Frederick, it will be remembered, had landed in a small boat upon the coast of Florida, from the vessel upon which he belonged. It was

supposed that his entire party had been killed. But such had not been the case. Frederick, however, was the only one saved. He had been carried off by the savages, and, after a time, had by chance fallen into the hands of MacDonald. This was shortly after the capture of his sister Jessie.

The renegade now felt that his position as captor-in-chief was, indeed, a proud one. A year before he had made overtures for the hand of Jessie to old Stephen Loveday, but had been spurned. At that time he was a professed hunter, but report pronounced him a common plunderer. Upon his rejection, the brute nature of the man at once showed itself, and he vowed the most terrible revenge. He joined the savages, and, by his reckless daring, had managed to raise himself to second in command. He was feared even by the savages themselves, for he would not pause at anything to gain his ends, or to gratify his revenge. Such was the monster who had possession of our friends.

After the first joys of meeting had passed, and explanations were mutually given, Judson asked :—

“ And your sister, Jessie, where is she ? ”

A convulsive tremor shook the frame of Frederick, as he replied :—

“ Near the end of all earthly suffering, I think ! ”

“ Dying ? ”

“ No, I think not yet. But she cannot last long. ”

“ What is the matter with her ? ”

“ Oh, Judson ! ” exclaimed Frederick, while his breast heaved with a terrible excitement, “ you never can know what I have suffered ; and yet I am still alive ! ”

“ I see the traces of more than mental suffering upon your face and form. ”

"My sister, bending under the weight of her grief, became a maniac."

"I heard this was the case!"

"Then you did hear of us?"

"Of Jessie, about a week since. Of yourself, a few hours after, from Charles Morris."

"Oh, yes; I saw him. But did he know me?"

"No. I did not even suspect who you were. I had long mourned you as dead. But go on. Tell me all about your sister."

"Better had she been dead. When I was brought here I found her, but she knew me not. She had been mad I know not how long, nor how long she had been a captive, for I am sure she did not come here voluntarily."

"Did MacDonald represent that she had come of her own free will?"

"Yes; he said she had been tormented by one of the officers of the garrison, and came here to hide herself, and to escape her father's promise of her hand to the officer. To avoid any attempt for her recovery, he said she was married to him by Indian rites."

"It is all false. She was forcibly seized by MacDonald a year ago, and brought here. Her father has made every effort to find her, and is grieving his life away on her account. Her professed marriage to MacDonald, if it ever took place at all, was as forced as her abduction."

"A year ago!" repeated Frederick, thoughtfully, "why her child is older than that, or else I am a very bad judge."

"Her child! Oh! yes. I remember it was said she had a child. Is it with her now?"

"Yes; and appears to share all its mother's grief. It, also, is quite ill."

"And you have watched over them for a whole year?"

"Constantly, Ned; but I cannot endure it much longer, I feel that I am sinking fast."

"Courage. Taylor will be here with troops in a day or two, and I hope for a rescue."

"God grant that it may be so. But would you like to see Jessie?"

"I would, indeed. Perhaps I may be of benefit to her."

"Follow me." Frederick entered the cabin, followed by Judson, leading Blanche. In a corner of the dreary lodge there had been erected a platform of plank. Upon this were placed a number of blankets and skins, forming a very comfortable bed. It evidently contained a human form. Judson approached, and bent over the couch, but he started back with an exclamation of horror.

"I have become accustomed to that face," said Frederick.

"Is she not dead?"

"Oh! no." At this moment the invalid threw off the covering from her face, and turned her gaze upon the intruders. It was as white as marble, while her great black eyes, which presented so strong a contrast, shone with an unnatural light. She first fixed her gaze upon Judson, and then turned it upon the blind girl. Then extending her hand, she asked:—

"Why are ye here, pretty maid?" The presence of the maniac had not been explained to Blanche, but, from the conversation she had heard between her lover and the brother, she comprehended the state of affairs. She therefore approached the bedside and attempted to speak. But her feelings overcame her, and she burst into tears.

"Don't weep, poor child!" said Jessie, as she caressed

the blind girl. "This should be a house of joy and not of grief. Charles will be here to-night, and then I am to be married. Oh! I shall be so happy! Then you shall have my boy. I am not his mother! I thought I was, but there was a bright form came to my bed last night and told me that I was not." A pair of little bright eyes peered timidly over the shoulders of the maniac, and then nestled down close by her side. Jessie placed her arms around the little one, and then exclaimed:—

"There, don't cry. Mamma will protect her boy."

"What a sad sight!" exclaimed Judson, as he stepped into the open air. "And can it be possible that this monster can retain that poor girl in his possession, an unwilling captive, from the mere desire of revenge? Her state is evidently at its worst."

"What do you think of her case?" asked Frederick, anxiously, perceiving that Judson evidently read her condition with a physician's eye.

"I think she will recover. She has been struggling with a violent fever, and I should judge it to be turning now. She will either sink at once, or begin to mend. If she should recover, there is one especial consolation you will have."

"What is that?"

"She will no longer be maniac!"

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. Such cases are always compensated for a long, low sickness, by a restoration of mental clearness, if they recover at all."

"God grant then she may recover, and yet prove a blessing to her friends, and see something of happiness, for her sufferings have indeed been great."

"Amen, and amen! And may her persecutor be made

to feel the weight of sorrow he has caused her to bear ! Blanche, darling," whispered Judson to the poor girl, who was yet weeping, "don't grieve. I trust a few days will suffice to make us all happy again in restored freedom."

"Do you think we will be rescued?"

"I do most confidently think so."

"And that poor Jessie will be restored to her friends again?"

"Yes; if we are saved, she, too, will share our good fortune."

"And will she, if she lives, be restored to her sound mind, fully, so as to know her friends?"

"Yes, I think so."

"And marry Charles Morris?"

"I see no reason to doubt it." And yet there was a look of pain passed over the face of Judson.

"And poor Blanche must remain in darkness for ever! Oh! it is hard—very hard! Why can I not rend this black veil from before my eyes, if only long enough to gaze once upon your dear face, Judson."

"You must not repine, darling."

"I know it is wrong—very wrong—but I cannot help it. I can remember—oh! it seems like a dream—when I was blessed with sight. The sun was beautiful—the heavens, the stars, the earth, the green fields—oh! do they look the same now, dear Judson?"

"The same as then, darling. You must fancy that you see things as you saw them then. You can hear now, Blanche. You can hear the waters of this rippling brook, as it goes singing by, and you can hear the tinkling of that cascade. Its music is as sweet to your ears as it is to mine. You cannot see them, it is true, while I, who can, have scarcely cast a glance in that direction. And if you

cannot see me, you can feel my touch, and hear my voice."

"But will you never weary of the poor blind girl?"

"You are all the world to me."

"You are good—oh! so good, and you make me so happy, dear Edward."

The happy trio—happy in their companionship of misery—Judson, Frederick, and Blanche—sat for some time in silence. At length they were startled by a cry, and the emaciated form of Jessie Loveday shot rapidly past them. Judson sprung to his feet to clasp her, but too late.

Upon a ledge, or rather shelf of rock, but a short distance from them, grew an oak of considerable size. It had, to all appearance, as it increased in size by growth, gradually settled, so that it hung over a chasm in a horizontal manner. It was held fast in this position by the huge roots which clung with great tenacity to the rock and soil. Toward this tree Jessie bent her steps, and almost before any person was aware that she had left her bed, she was walking upon the trunk, and had even reached the branches of the oak. There upon that giddy height she stood erect, calling and beckoning to some imaginary person. Further and further she proceeded, until the frail limbs bent beneath her weight. She then seated herself upon one of the branches, and called:—

"Charles! Charles! Are you not coming?"

Her friends stood horror-stricken. They dared not move—they dared not speak. The very blood appeared frozen within their veins. A false step or movement, and poor Jessie would be dashed to pieces upon the rocks below.

"What can be done? Is there no way to save her?" whispered Frederick. "Hush! She is speaking again!"

"Shall I come to you, Charles? Well, wait for me, and I will come."

"Oh! my God! She is going still further on. Two more feet and she will be lost. I must—I must—Jessie! Jessie—here is your Charles!" The poor girl heard the voice, and reseating herself, cast back a mournful glance, exclaiming as she did so:—

"No! You are deceiving me. Here he is!" and she pointed away out in the airy world before her.

"She will be lost unless something can be done at once."

"The child!"

"What do you mean?"

"It is a desperate hazard, but the only chance. See, she is already making motions to her fancied lover. Quick! bring the child!" Judson sprung into the cabin, and soon returned with the child in his arms. He hurried with it to the foot of the tree, and holding it forth, exclaimed:—

"Jessie—Jessie! Come. Baby wants you!"

It was a moment of intense anguish. Upon the result of a sentiment hung a human life. And if death came—such a death! It was horrible to contemplate. Great drops of perspiration stood upon the faces of the two men.

When Jessie saw the child, she started up with a cry of joy, and commenced to retrace her steps. Her movement was so sudden that she lost her balance, and she toppled over. But she caught with one hand upon a slender limb, and there hung with an almost superhuman strength. A moment more and she must lose her hold, and be dashed in pieces upon the earth below.

"Oh, God! Why am I chained!" groaned Frederick,

as he covered his face with his hands, and fell almost lifeless to the ground. Judson sprung for the oak, but he was seized by a powerful hand and thrown aside. Then a voice exclaimed:—

"You are too badly hurt, young man, to attempt so perilous a task. It requires strength!" These words did not stay the speaker, for he had already reached the branches of the oak.

Jessie was still beyond his reach. He, therefore, clasped the body of the tree with his legs, turning his head and body downward. Hanging in this manner, he caught the girl in his powerful arms. In a moment more he sat astride the trunk. After a short time he slowly advanced, and Jessie was delivered safely into the arms of Judson.

"Oh! how can we ever thank you?" exclaimed both brother and friend together, as they saw the danger passed.

"Billy Bowlegs, Chief of the Seminoles, wants no thanks for doing simply his duty."

"It was a noble act, and performed, I believe, from the promptings of a noble heart. I wish we could be friends."

"And so we can be, when the usurper's foot is withdrawn from my territory."

"May I ask you one question?" said Judson.

"Proceed."

"Is it by your consent that these maidens are detained here prisoners?"

"No. And not with my knowledge until very recently."

"Will you not release them?"

"They shall be free!"

"Oh! no! You speak so kindly that I am sure you are good, and I will always love you."

A tear started to the eye of the chief, but he dashed it aside, exclaiming, as he turned away:—

"I have seen her face and heard her voice before. It must have been when she was a child, although I do not recollect ever having heard the name of Robert Bradley."

The chief walked from the cabin. He was heard to speak in a loud and angry tone, and, leaving Blanche seated by the side of the sleeper, the brother and Judson followed. They saw large numbers of the savages coming up the winding pathway.

It was but a few moments before perhaps a hundred warriors gained the flat, and, with perfect silence, seated themselves upon the ground. MacDonald was at their head.

"What means this?" cried Billy, his eyes flashing with rage.

"It means," returned MacDonald, calmly, "that I have called a council."

"And have you dared to call a council of my braves and warriors without consulting me?"

"I have dared to do what every member of the tribe has a right to do," was the half-ferocious answer.

"You shall be made to pay for this. I will teach you your place. Men, seize that traitor!"

No one moved—not a hand obeyed the call.

"Speak to them again—they don't hear you." The white savage smiled, as if his triumph were complete.

"Why have you called my warriors together?" asked the chief.

"For council, I said."

"To what end?"

"You threatened to release my captives. I have called the warriors together for them to decide whether or not you have a right to do so."

"Then let them decide."

"And you will be governed by their decision?"

"No! I shall be governed by my own decision—by justice! I shall repudiate all law which permits such villany as you have practised, even though it displace me from my command, and reduce me to the position of a prisoner."

"Which it will be very likely to do if you attempt to set aside the laws which you know are not to be changed by any man's will."

"Well, go on. State your case to my men, and make your appeal. I am prepared to answer you—and to fight!"

"Men," exclaimed MacDonald, stepping forward, "I have now in my possession four prisoners. I captured them without assistance. Have I not a right to hold them in spite of any personal sympathy which the chief may feel?"

The different appeals were made in the language used by the Seminoles, of which MacDonald was perfect master.

"Yes! yes!" was the low, but unanimous response.

"But," said the chief, stepping forward, "two of the prisoners are women. We do not make war upon such. Besides, we have no right, by our laws, to capture or retain any female who has not a husband, father, or brother in arms against us. Neither of these females have any such friend opposed to us. Has he, then, a right to keep them against my orders?"

"No! no!"

your old leader because he wishes to set free two poor captive women, or rather children. What are you to do? Will you trust to that man? Not one drop of Indian blood flows in his veins, and he will forsake you when it becomes his interest to do so. Who will lead you into the battle which will take place soon? Shall it be the man who bound your chief? If so, I am content, but it will be ill for you."

There was a reaction in favour of the speaker, and the savages began whispering together, and casting glances of hatred toward MacDonald. The renegade saw this, and he knew that he must counteract the effect of this speech in some manner. He therefore said:—

"Men, the chief tells you that I will prove false to you in the hour of danger! Have you not seen me often in battle? Did I ever desert you at such a time? I will tell you something that will startle you, and I only ask you to wait a short time, and you will learn the truth of what I say. It is the intention of the chief to sell you all! He has already plotted to surrender you to the enemy as he did, two nights ago, the band that accompanied us to the fort."

A series of yells followed this announcement, and the savages danced fiercely around, brandishing their tomahawks, and evincing the most violent demonstrations.

In a short time, however, the chief—his feet having also been bound—and the captives were left alone. But a guard was kept at a little distance, and the attempt upon the part of any of them to escape would have resulted fatally.

"Oh! my friend," said Judson, "you have brought this upon yourself for me. I pity you."

"You are mistaken," replied the chief. "I acted

from my own free will, and was not influenced by your advice or wishes."

"Perhaps I should have said for us?"

"It was only my duty to attempt what I have."

"And think you it will prove altogether a failure?"

"Not altogether. The sick girl will be saved, but I fear for the blind one."

"What do you mean?" asked the lover, the blood mounting to his very temples.

"I mean this. MacDonald is well aware that upon the arrival of the enemy his trick will be found out. He will not remain, but take the earliest opportunity to depart. He dare not meet me if I am ever again free. He cannot remove the sick girl. Indeed, I think he has little disposition to do so. He will, therefore, take the blind one, if it is possible, for he is not the man to give over any well-matured purpose."

"Can I not escape with her to-night?"

"It would be certain death to you to pass that door after nightfall. But there is hope yet. The troops may arrive before the traitor expects, and if the girl has not already been removed, it will be too late to do so then. I might possibly have saved them by pretending that they were my own children, but I could not say so. There is one favour I wish you to do me. Will you?"

"Anything! What is it?"

"After dark I will roll near the door of the cabin. You will not be bound. You must untie my hands and feet. If MacDonald comes near us during the night, I will hurl him from the precipice. But as daylight approaches, I must again be tied."

This was done: but the looked-for visitor came not. Slowly the night passed away; while the chief chafed

under his restraint like a chained tiger. As the hours waned, he felt the chances lessen which he had hoped would offer to assist him again to power.

CHAPTER XI.

PLOTTINGS OF A NIGHT.

POOR Jessie Loveday rested well during the night. Not a word or groan escaped her ; while Blanche, in her loving confidence, slept as sweetly as an infant reposing upon its mother's bosom. Well was it for her that she could thus sleep.

To the lieutenant the situation was new, and possessed something of romance. It would call forth action, stratagem, daring ; and this would have given a charm even to captivity, had it not been for the deep solicitude he felt in behalf of the females. But he had confidence in the ultimate triumph of the chief, and still more so as to the result when the troops should arrive. And so the night passed, not hopelessly, away for him.

Not so with Frederick. A thousand times before had hope filled his heart, only to vanish and leave the darkness there more intense. Often had his sister appeared to regain, for an instant, her reason. She would, at times, gaze mournfully into his face and call him brother, and his heart would swell with joy, but soon her mind would again become clouded, and her ravings perhaps more wild. Day by day he had watched over her, hoping and praying, until at length his very soul had sickened, and his strength and courage almost forsaken him. Still, he relaxed not in his attentions, watching as before, suffering as before, loving as before, although not so hoping.

It is true he now had friends near him, but they were powerless; and in his fancy he could but repaint the picture ever before himself. Perhaps Judson would be fettered like himself, and like himself become broken-hearted—crushed in body and spirit. Perhaps poor blind Blanche would become a maniac under the restraint and taunts of the wretch who held her in bonds.

And his own dear sister? Was she indeed destined to recover from the malady which had preyed upon her mind? It had, at times, brought her fancied happiness, rendering her, as it did, oblivious to her real situation. Should consciousness return and be permanent, her anguish would be immeasurably increased, if her captivity should continue.

But Judson had said that the troops were coming. There was hope in that. The chief evidently was the friend of the females, and here was more hope, even though he was a prisoner himself. Hours passed, and Frederick mused on, striving to see deliverance even in that dark time.

At length he arose to his feet, and stepped softly to the bedside of his sister. The pale moon shone through an opening, and its rays played about her lips. She was smiling sweetly. He bent his face close to hers, and listened. She was breathing soft and regularly. He placed his hand gently upon her brow. It was not marble-like or flushed as it had alternately been, but bore a genial warmth. He pressed his lips to her pale cheek. His breast heaved—a half-suppressed sigh was heard, and when he raised his head, there was a glistening drop resting upon the sleeper's face. A tear had fallen from that manly eye. The child was also sleeping by her side.

Blanche was resting upon a rude bed by the side of

Jessie. She, too, was smiling. Does not some bright angel hover near the pillow of the innocent when danger threatens and dark clouds are gathering? Frederick gazed upon her, and exclaimed :—

“Sleep on, poor child. You are happy now. Oh! that your waking could be equally so!”

“Frederick!”

“Ah! Ned. Are you awake?”

“Do you think I could sleep?”

“And yet you require rest.”

“And do you not require rest, also?”

“I have become accustomed to this watching. It is my constant, endless duty.”

“Well, they say one can get used to anything but hanging.”

“You are disposed to jest, Ned.”

“Well, why not, Fred? Jessie is recovering, and to-morrow we will all be free and happy.”

“Why are you so confident?”

“Why? Didn't I tell you that Colonel Taylor was coming?”

“Yes, but you do not suppose that he can walk directly into this stronghold, as he could walk into the open door of a church, do you?”

“Well, I do expect there will be some opposition, but that he will succeed, I am confident. Zachary Taylor is a man who never attempts what he dare not carry out, if courage, resolution, and a quick mind can avail.”

“He may. But it will be after a long siege. You have no idea of the strength of the works below. This spot is only approached by a narrow, winding pathway, up the sharp hill-side. I tell you, twenty determined men can hold this place against a thousand.”

"If that thousand were coming from below, perhaps. But how from above?"

"I do not know about that, never having thought of such an approach."

"Have you never been higher up than this spot?"

"Never. I was brought through the village when I came here, and since that time I have never left the place."

"Well, Charley Morris has explored these hills, and is acquainted with the approaches to this den. He will act as guide, and my word for it, they will find some way to reach us."

"Well, that offers some comfort. Shall we not question Billy with regard to the probabilities of success, if the attack is made from above?"

"Not for the world, Fred. It would be a direct insult."

"He appears to be our friend!"

"Don't say our friend, for he is not. He is a friend to those innocent creatures lying there, for humanity's sake. But he is not a friend to either of us. We are his prisoners of war."

"But he is himself a prisoner now!"

"Exactly. And that is one reason why we should not make any propositions, or ask any questions which would indicate that we entertained the least suspicion he could prove false to his band. No. I tell you, Billy is as true as steel. He will be released before the fight begins, and will head his men. It is this I fear more than anything else. No, Fred, do not imagine for a moment that, because the chief resolved to save those poor girls, he is a traitor to his tribe."

"Why do you so much fear the leadership of Billy?"

"Because he is the only one under whom the men will fight well."

"I think MacDonald will head them well."

"No. It is not his intention to head them at all."

"How do you know this?"

"I will tell you. During the night and darkness, I have been busy, as you will learn. I crept cautiously to the edge of the next lodge. I heard the rascal and another white renegade in conversation. It was very pleasant. They first proposed to kill you, the chief, and myself. It seems they have a quantity of gold secreted somewhere, which is the result of former plunders. After we were quietly disposed of, they proposed to take Blanche, and make the best of their way to the coast, where they would embark for the Bahamas, and turn wreckers."

"Well, and what prevented them from carrying out their pleasant programme?"

"It was feared, if they attempted to murder the chief, they would be discovered. For although the Indians are prejudiced against him at the present time, they would not submit to that, and an attempt of the kind upon his part, would unmask the villany of MacDonald."

"What did they decide to do?"

"Well, you may as well know, so as to be prepared to meet it."

"Speak. I shall not be alarmed as far as any plot may refer to myself."

"Well, Fred, he is to wait until the boats appear at the edge of the lake, and the troops are ready for a move. He is to appear very valorous himself, and offer to lead on the warriors; but, finally, in order to test Billy, he is to suggest that the chief be released and permitted to

take command. This, of course, he will do, as he could not see the whites approach without being at the head of his men, if it was possible for him to do so. After all the men, with the exception of a guard at this place, which will be his confidants, have been withdrawn, Mac will return, knock us quickly upon the head, take Blanche, and make his way to the coast."

"A very pleasant arrangement for us, truly. But, what is to become of Jessie?"

"If it is deemed safe to transport her, she will be taken along; but if she is too ill, she will be left behind. But the scoundrel cares nothing about her, and is, in reality, afraid of her on account of her madness."

"What steps can we take in this matter?"

"As soon as I heard this conversation, I returned and informed the chief of it. I could distinctly see, by the light of the moon, that his face was working with the intensity of his feelings. After a time, he said:—

"'If the enemy marches upon me, I shall fight to the last. But, I desire that the women shall be saved, and I am determined it shall be so.' He then asked me to pledge him my honour, not only for myself but for you, that, in case he left us, we would not offer to escape, provided he left us with arms to protect the females; or, if we found that we could convey them to their friends, and did so, that we would return and deliver ourselves up."

"And you made the promise?"

"I did."

"But if Taylor should be successful?"

"Then, of course, we are all free. Here is a knife for you. I have another myself. But, remember, we are to use them upon no person except MacDonald. You will

also find that the staple to which the chain which binds you is attached has been loosened. It can be easily drawn. But you are not to take advantage of this, unless it becomes necessary to protect the girls, or save yourself from assassination."

"Is Billy at the door?"

"But a short distance from it."

"And still bound?"

"He has been free since dark. But day is breaking. I must fasten the cords, as this was Billy's request." Judson stepped into the open air, and in a short time the ropes were securely drawn around the chief. He seated himself by his side, and watched the grey merging into the blue, and the pale white receiving the golden tints. The morning star lost its brilliancy, and the god of day arose, blushing, from its bed.

It was a lovely December morning, genial in that climate as a May-day in the more northern latitudes. The birds trilled forth their notes of joy as merrily as if no saddened heart was beating to their music.

Judson gazed listlessly upon the lake, and far away he thought he saw a dark speck, which each moment assumed a form more definite. But he was mistaken. It was but the shadow of a fleecy cloud.

Of a sudden he appeared to recollect something, and, placing his hand in his bosom, he drew forth the paper which contained the secret and opened it. Then, turning toward the cabin, he called:—

"Frederick! Frederick!" That person immediately made his appearance.

"Be seated, Fred. If I am not mistaken, this paper, which was given me, and is said to contain a secret with regard to Blanche, may, at least a portion of it, be read

aloud to you, Fred. Let us move a little apart. You see the opening paragraph commences with strange words. 'To James MacDonald I owe all my misery!'"

CHAPTER XII.

THE MYSTERIOUS DOCUMENT.

"WHERE has not that serpent left his sting! But go on. Read."

"The document is well-written, showing a person of no ordinary cultivation :—

"To James MacDonald I owe all my misery !

"I was born in the year 1806, on the island of Cuba, near the city of Havana. My father was a wealthy planter. My early recollection is identical with a house where all was sunshine. I received a liberal education in a seminary at New Orleans. At the age of eighteen I graduated, and returned to my home. A grand *fête* was to be given, which was to usher me into society. My father's mansion blazed with brilliancy, and the guests were already assembling.

"Upon a sudden I heard a great commotion below. I was preparing for the occasion in an upper room. I despatched my maid to learn the cause. She returned, speechless and trembling. I rushed from my room to the scene. I saw a file of soldiers. My father was in custody. He was heavily ironed. The servants were rushing, in a frantic manner, through the rooms, while the guests stood paralyzed. My mother was sobbing, and prostrate upon the floor. I knelt by her, and begged that she would explain. But she had fainted, and could not. I sprung to my father's arms, but was rudely torn from him by one of the soldiers. A mist came over my

"We were off the coast of Florida when a violent storm arose. For a whole night we were tossed about in the raging waters. Our vessel was a frail one, and at length she struck a rock and was torn into a thousand fragments. I recollect the roaring of the dark waters as I was plunged into them, and then all was dark.

"I awoke and found myself in a strange place. Beside me sat a stranger. His face was kind, and it reassured me. He spoke, and his voice was gentle. He had saved me from a watery grave, and I felt gratitude, although I sometimes wished that, if it could have been consistent with the will of heaven, I might have perished. My mother was no more, and I was alone in the wide world.

"It was a month before I was sufficiently recovered from the shock to leave my room. But, on examination, I found that my home was no mean one. It was a frame dwelling, containing but two rooms, it is true, but then it was standing upon the bank of a beautiful river, which wound its course through one of the most delightful groves I ever saw. The room which I had occupied was furnished with considerable taste, and several interesting books and drawings ornamented the table.

"My preserver, during my illness—a portion of the time I was delirious—was gentle as a mother could be, and I often gazed upon him with wonder. Powerful as man could be, swarthy as an Indian, fearless in time of danger, and yet, gentle as a lamb. Even after my recovery, I lingered at this place, as if held by some enchantment. Perhaps it was because I knew not where to go. I certainly felt an attachment for my preserver, but I did not dream of its depths. I often observed that he would sit for hours gazing upon me, and I could not divine the cause.

"At length I spoke of departure. I saw the tears start to his eyes, and he begged me, if I could only content myself in his poor home, to remain a little longer. I knew not then why, but I gladly accepted the invitation. He now began to be absent from me more than he had been. He was frequently called to St. Augustine, a distance of twenty miles. He was also frequently called to the coast, and he saved many lives as he had done my own.

"At such times I felt the greatest solicitude for his safety, and was only happy when he returned and smiled upon me. But things could not remain long as they were. I again spoke of taking my departure. He trembled like a frightened child for a moment, and then told me that when I went, it seemed to him as if the sun of his happiness would set for ever. He loved me. Enough, that the educated Spanish girl became the wife of William Montgomery, the uncouth fisherman, hunter, and wrecker of the St. John's river. But he possessed a fair education and natural intellect, and I was happy.

"We had been married nearly a year. I was very fond, during the absence of my husband, of wandering through the grove, and by the beautiful river. On several occasions I had seen a stranger pass near to me, but I gave no heed to it, until my husband had asked me at several different times who it was that had left the dwelling just as he was approaching. I had seen no one, except in the grove.

"One day I saw William pick up a bit of paper near my bedroom window, which had been standing open. He glanced at it, and then turned his gaze upon me. I did not understand the meaning of that glance, and I asked him to let me see the paper. He did not reply,

but left the house with the first frown I had ever seen resting upon his face.

"I know not why, but his looks and the thoughts of that paper troubled me. That night he scarcely spoke to me. I begged him to tell me the cause, but he did not. When he left me on the following morning, I observed that he changed his coat, putting on one which he seldom wore, except when he went to St. Augustine. I asked him if he was going to that city, and he replied that he was not. His kiss at parting was cold, and his brow was stern. I thought I could detect a shade of sadness upon it. I watched until he disappeared from view. I then thought of the coat, and I instantly proceeded to search the pockets. I found the slip of paper, and read upon it the following words :—

" 'Darling, we must be cautious. I fear your husband suspects our intimacy ; if he should discover us, my life would be taken.'

"As I read those words, my brain reeled and I came near falling. I felt that fierce jealousy so peculiar to the Spanish character instantly aroused within me. I flew to the books where my husband had inscribed his name, and compared the handwriting. There was certainly a resemblance.

"And the truth was out ! My husband was intriguing with another, and that a married woman. He feared her husband suspected, and had, no doubt, written that slip to hand her, in case he should have no opportunity to address her. I passed the day in tears. My suspicion at once fell upon a party by the name of Mulford, who resided about three miles from us.

"It was quite late in the evening when my husband returned, and jealousy had not left me in a very good

humour to receive him. I did not even rise as he entered, but he came directly across the room and imprinted a kiss upon my lips. But it appeared entirely formal, and I did not return it. He then asked me, in a voice which I thought trembled with emotion, who it was that had just passed up the road. I had seen no person, but I wished to be sarcastic, and I replied that it must have been Mr. Mulford.

"I do not think there was another word passed between us that night. As usual, the next day he left me. Each subsequent day he became apparently more indifferent to me, which naturally increased the jealousy and the coldness upon my part. I was soon to become a mother.

"One day my husband left me, saying that he was going to the city, and should not return until the next day. Night came on. I had heard something of the Seminole Indians, and I confess I felt uneasy. But, shaking off this feeling as much as possible, I retired to my bed. It was perhaps ten o'clock. I heard a noise at my window. I raised myself, and listened. The sash was raised, and a dark form entered. I was almost paralysed with fear, when the intruder called my name in a whisper, and cautioned me to be silent, saying there were Indians around. I thought it was my husband. At the thought of danger, all my resentment vanished. I sprung to his side, throwing my arms around his neck.

"At this instant the door leading to the second apartment opened, and my husband entered, holding in his hand a light. The stranger disengaged my arms, bounded through the open window, and was gone. I stood like a statue. I was utterly confused—I knew not what to say. Not that I had ever dreamed that my husband was jealous of me. He staggered back, and gave vent to a

groan that I never can forget. I sprung forward to meet him, but he stepped back, closed the door upon me, and I heard him leave the house.

"All that night I sat watching and listening. Certain it was that my husband had cause to think strangely on discovering a man standing in my room, while I was encircling him with my arms. But as he certainly had no reason to misjudge me, he should have waited for an explanation. What was the motive of the stranger in entering in that manner, and addressing me as he did? I at length arrived at the conclusion that my husband loved another, and had wearied of me, and that this was a plot to fasten guilt upon me, in order to furnish a palpable excuse for leaving me.

"The night passed slowly away. Morning came. A neighbour passed the door and handed me a letter. He then proceeded, and I was alone. I glanced at the superscription, and at once recognised the handwriting of my husband. I broke the seal and opened the paper. My eyes immediately fell upon three separate slips. I took up the first and read :—

" ' Darling, we must be cautious. I fear your husband suspects our intimacy ; if he should discover us, my life would be taken !'

"This was the paper I had before seen, and which had been the grounds of all my jealousy. It explained nothing. I took the second slip and read :—

" ' I learn your husband will go to St. Augustine on Thursday next. If he should, I will come.'

"And that Thursday was yesterday, the very time that my husband was absent. It was clear to me that he was the writer, and that he had passed the day with Mrs. Mulford. But why should he send me these papers ?

Why, unless to taunt me? I clutched fiercely at the third slip:—

“ ‘Wednesday Eve.—Your husband goes to morrow, sure. I will come at ten o’clock in the evening. Expect me, darling!’

“ But he was not there at that hour, for he was here. It was just ten when he entered this room and found the stranger. But let me read his letter:—

“ ‘When I married you I little dreamed it would come to this. I loved you, and do love you still, better than life. I wondered how you could love me, but I did not think you capable of such treachery. O God! you have murdered me. I have found these slips of paper which were sent to and intended for you. I was a personal witness to your duplicity and my shame, although I would to God my eyes had been closed in death before that horrid sight had been presented to them. You will never, never, see me again; but oh! I beg of you, for the sake of our unborn child, to beware of those who would ruin you. I leave the country a broken-hearted man.

‘WILLIAM.’

“ Those slips were written for and sent to me! What could it mean? I read the letter over and over, and at length the truth began to break in upon me. I had been the victim of a vile plot. But I had no enemies. I called upon my husband. He did not answer. I was almost frantic, and in a voice of agony I cried:—

“ ‘Who has done this?’ An answer came which froze my very blood, and I fainted. That answer was:—

“ ‘JAMES MACDONALD! And he will pursue you and yours to the death! He has sworn it!’ ”

“ Oh! the monstrous villain!” exclaimed Judson, as he sprung to his feet, “but he shall pay for this.”

"But go on with the paper, Ned ; I am most painfully interested."

"To proceed.

"I scarcely recovered my consciousness until after my child was born. I sought protection of my neighbours ; but they, believing me the party in error, cast me off as unworthy. The villain still pursued me. I determined to go anywhere to escape him. So, with my child in my arms, I left that home I loved so much and wandered forth. Day and night I kept on my way, but at length body and heart both failed me, and I fell fainting at the door of a cabin.

"When I recovered, I found myself and child kindly cared for by an old man. Since that time, I have made his house my home. He learned my story, and, for the safety of myself and child, he called me wife ; but I am not so. I feel for him the affection of a sister, for he has ever been kind, noble, respectful.

"My story is nearly ended. My child had arrived at the age of four. One night the cabin was attacked by a small party of Indians, but Robert Bradley—this was my benefactor's name—succeeded in driving them away. During the firing, the gun which Robert held exploded, and the pieces flew in every direction. By this accident Mr. Bradley lost an eye, and my poor Blanche her sight entirely. I learned afterward that this attack was led by MacDonald, who, true to his savage instincts, had in truth, joined the Seminoles."

Then there were other words which appeared to have been penned at a later date. They were faintly written, and ran as follows :—

"I have a presentiment of evil. Judson, if I should die, be good to my poor child, and pity her unhappy

mother. I have seen, by chance, my husband. He knows not that we are even alive. He is—"

"Well, go on, Ned. Who is the father of Blanche?"

"The paper is here folded over, and sealed with half a dozen wafers. Wait a moment, and I will break it open."

"Put up the paper. Here comes MacDonald, and it is not best that he should see it. He is too intimately concerned." Judson returned the paper to his bosom.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BATTLE.

Down upon the lake were plainly to be seen the boats which contained a few soldiers and the supplies for Taylor's little army. And marching along the edge of the Everglades were the troops. They had advanced most of the distance by land, and the transports, instead of being brought directly across the lake in plain view as the Indians had expected, were kept close to the shore and as much concealed as possible. Thus the savages had been deceived, and their enemy was upon them before they were aware of his presence, although they were not unprepared to receive him.

Bill Silly had joined the command of Taylor, and informed that officer of all he knew concerning Judson. Charley Morris had also recovered from his wound and was with his friends. The ball from the rifle of MacDonald had cut a furrow in his temple, and had rendered him senseless for a time, but the injury was not of a serious character. He could not be induced to remain behind.

It was just as MacDonald was approaching our friends.

that they discovered the troops. A smile lighted up the face of Judson as he pointed to them, and asked :—

“Do you see that?”

“Yes,” returned the renegade, in the most indifferent tones. “Does that afford you any special comfort?”

“To be candid with you, I should say it did.”

“You expect a speedy release?”

“I shall hope such may be the case.”

“Do you think your troops will be able to take the works in the valley below?”

“I do.”

“And the place where we now are?”

“I do.”

“And then you expect to be free?”

“Of course.”

“Shall I tell you my plans?” asked MacDonald, a curl of contempt playing about his mouth.

“You can do just as you think fit about that.”

“Oh! you are very indifferent now; but you will not remain so long. Do you see yonder black building?”

“Yes.”

“It is the magazine. I am about to remove you and your friends to that building. If there is the slightest chance of your friends reaching this place, the magazine will be blown to atoms. What do you think of this? Are you indifferent to my plans now?”

Both Judson and Fred clutched the knife which Billy had given them. They had little fear that the threat with regard to the magazine would be carried into execution. They were sure that his object in removing them was that he might the easier carry out his plans of the night before, and remove Blanche. They resolved that the villain should die then and there.

But in this they were foiled, for, unseen by them, four powerful Indians had approached from the rear and seized them. They had made an agreement to use the weapons upon no person but MacDonald, and they were, therefore, compelled to submit. They were conveyed at once to the magazine and firmly bound. They were placed in such a position as not only to be able to see all that took place around them, but to hear any ordinary conversation which occurred at the cabin where the females were, and in front of which the chief was lying. Below they could see the savages forming in a square which occupied the centre of the village, and they judged their numbers to be about three hundred. They could not but express their surprise that so small a number was remaining of the two thousand warriors who formed their army at the commencement of hostilities.

A dozen braves stood near MacDonald, evidently awaiting orders. The renegade turned to them, and said :—

"I wish to give our chief an opportunity to vindicate himself. He shall lead you to-day. Unbind him." This was done. The chief sprung to his feet. He gazed with a bitter frown upon the white troops, and then turning to his braves, he asked :—

"Shall I lead you?"

"Yes," was the ready response.

"And you will obey me in every particular?"

"Yes."

"Then we will be victorious. MacDonald, go you to the outer work with a hundred men. I will join you soon." The fellow bit his lips, but there was no alternative, and he did as directed.

Then turning to one of the braves, he said :—

"Defend the pass below with twenty men. Lowery,

follow MacDonald." The person to whom the chief addressed himself was the white renegade with whom MacDonald had been plotting the day before. He listened and asked :—

"And the guard here?"

"Question me not," yelled the chief, "but do as I bid you."

Lowery obeyed. The fighting had already commenced.

"It is probable that the chief has forgotten us," said Judson. "I do not think it was his intention to have left us here bound. But his thoughts are now all given to the work before him."

"Well, I think we are safe, for, as far as I can see, there is not a soul left behind excepting ourselves and the girls."

"Can't we manage to free ourselves? How are your hands?"

"Bound so tightly that I cannot move them."

"Hold a moment. I think I can loosen one of mine, and then, with the use of my knife, we will both soon be free. No, I am so firmly tied it is impossible."

"Fred, look below! Listen to those shouts! By the Eternal they are charging the works! Look there! look there! Over they go! Hark to the cheering! And, see! the savages are flying in wild confusion! Hurrah! hurrah! The day is ours! Oh! these infernal ropes!"

"The next stand they make will be at the base of the hill, or perhaps upon this very spot."

"Fred, we must be free."

"Can't we call Blanche?"

"Blanche! Blanche!" The blind girl appeared at the door when she heard the voice of Judson, and he continued :—

"Come to us, Blanche, at once."

"Is there not danger that she will fall over the rocks?"

"No; I can guide her. This way, Blanche. Do you hear my voice?"

"Yes, dear Edward."

"Well, then, come—straight—there, a little more to the right. Huzza! Fred, we will soon be free!"

"I think not!" MacDonald came bounding up the pathway and reached the spot. He seized Blanche as she had almost reached her lover, and, raising her in his arms as he would have done an infant, dashed forward, climbing the rocks above.

"O God! and must I lose her now that freedom appeared so near?" cried Judson. He made a most desperate effort, and succeeded in releasing his feet, but his hands still remained firmly bound. He sprang from the hut and attempted to follow, but found it impossible to do so. MacDonald had disappeared from view.

There now was a rattle of musketry at the base of the cliff. The yells of the savages and the cheering of the soldiers told the story that there, too, victory for the latter had been complete.

Billy came bounding up the pathway, and his voice was heard above the din of the battle, encouraging his men to make another and a last stand at that point.

"Release me—unbind my hands!" cried Judson, as he sprang toward the chief.

"When I can fight no longer!" was the response.

"Think no more of fighting until you have attended to a more sacred duty," cried Judson. "Your child requires your aid!"

"What do you mean?" asked the chief, as he severed the cords which bound Judson.

"That Blanche, the blind girl, is your own daughter!"

"How know you this?"

"By the confession of her own mother, your wife. Here it is, written upon this paper. Look for yourself."

The chief snatched the letter and read:—

"Her father, William Montgomery, is now the Chief of the Seminoles, and is known as Billy Bowlegs!"

"It is her writing," he cried. "My God, where is Blanche?"

"In the power of MacDonald. He is bearing her up the rock!" Billy was about to start in pursuit, when a detachment of soldiers suddenly came up and seized him.

"Let me go until I have rescued her—my oh—that captive."

"What captive?"

"Don't you see her? There—there upon that rock, and in the hands of MacDonald."

Upon a ledge, a hundred feet above them, the renegade appeared, bearing his precious burden. He paused, as if opposed by some obstacle. A form appeared beside him. It was old Bob Bradley. MacDonald placed his victim upon the rock, and sprung upon his foe. The struggle was a short one. Bob staggered back, and fell. But another form appeared upon the scene of action, and, seizing the villain, hurled him from the rocks. His fall was broken to some extent by the branches of the trees, but it was a terrible one.

Charley Morris, for he it was, clasped poor Blanche in his arms, and began his descent amid the cheering of the soldiers, followed by Bradley. They soon reached the landing.

Billy had sprung forward and seized MacDonald, dragging him into the midst of the group. The renegade

"was yet alive, although he was terribly mangled. He gazed fearfully around him, and then said :—

"Even in death I triumph, I killed your wife—I—I—" The eyes of the wretch met those of Charles Morris, and he continued :—

"It is to you I owe this? But take your maniac and her brat—curse—cu—" The wretched man spoke no more. He was dead.

Father and lover—old Mr. Loveday and Charles—entered the cabin where Jessie was reposing. She had been awakened by the unusual noise, and as her friends bent over her she looked up, extending her hands, and smiling sweetly, she exclaimed :—

"Father—Charles!" Poor Jessie, indeed, was a maniac no more, as was prophesied by her noble deliverer, Billy Bowlegs.

The entire party now assembled in front of the cabin, and explanations were the order of the hour. They, indeed, were necessary, to clear up the remarkable mystery which has enveloped our story like a veil.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FAMILY HISTORY.

A GROAN announced the presence of a sufferer. In the midst of the rejoicings and explanations of that rapturous meeting of friends, old Bradley had lain a silent spectator; but even his strong nature had to succumb to the power of his internal torture. In a moment Judson was bending over him. Even in his pain a smile of satisfaction would flit over his face, to be followed by the pallor and tremour which only too well told of his approaching end.

"How is it with you, my friend?" asked Judson, kindly, as he felt the wounded man's pulse.

"The end is near, Judson; and I am rejoiced, for I have longed to be with her who has gone before." He spoke with an earnestness so solemn as to impress all with silence. "My friends," he added, "I am rejoiced at this moment—for yourselves and for myself. You are young and have much happiness in store; therefore, live and enjoy it. I am past the meridian of life, and have long been waiting for the hour of my deliverance from myself." He raised upon one elbow, when Judson and Charles placed folded blankets under his head, so that he rested in ease. For a minute all was silent. Then he looked around wistfully, as if seeking for some one.

"Who is it you would see?"

"Loveday—is he here?"

The old man advanced and bent over the sufferer. Suddenly his face assumed a deathlike pallor, as the eyes of the two met; then he trembled like an aspen and sunk upon the earth beside the wounded and dying man. All around gazed upon the two men in astonishment, and in their faces read another mystery. How singularly alike they were! It is said that, in the hour of death, the face, for a while, assumes the expression of its childhood, as if the beauty and purity of innocence gleamed out for a moment through the windows of the soul to show that it still was there, an immortal counterpart of the being. Loveday's face, with its thin lines, and worn, haggard expression, looked so like Bradley's in feature and a certain family likeness, that a stranger at once would have pronounced them brothers. Were they so? Bradley smiled, at length, as the old man sunk beside him on the ground—one of those ineffably sweet smiles which betoken

the possession of a pure heart and a clear conscience. Then he said :—

“ Henry, you know me now ? ”

“ I recognize you my brother ; and would to God it were I who were to go. ”

“ Nay, not so, Harry ; live to comfort your child and to do me justice ; for here on my bed of death, I declare to you that never, in all the past, have I wronged you in word or in deed. You fled from the estate believing me to have usurped the property, and to have forced from our dear father the will which gave me all ; but it was all your own mistake. I awaited your return for years, keeping the property all in good order, that you should share it with me equally—that we should live in brotherhood together, and thus fulfil the great law of love. But you came not ; and, only by chance did I learn of your presence in this beautiful but lonely and dangerous region. I came hither, assuming a false name, that I might approach you as a stranger and accomplish a reconciliation before you should be made aware of my identity. I did approach you, but your scorn even of the family name rendered it impossible to recur to it even ; so here I have dwelt, pleased with the wild life around, glad to be near you and your child, even though as a stranger for whom you entertained a repulsion. I had resolved to restore all to you—to take of the estate nothing, for my simple and peaceful life here requires nothing which my hands could not easily obtain. I am going now, my dear brother, and leave all to you. You will find the estate in perfect order, and all you have to do is to take possession as the proper heir and successor, since I die childless. ”

“ No, not so, dear Oscar ! Is not Blanche your own daughter ? ” asked Loveday, with much emotion.

"Not my daughter by blood, but very dear to me ; and to you I commit her fortunes, if, indeed, another shall not claim her as his own," and he looked inquiringly into the face of Judson.

"Blanche is my betrothed, and by the memory of her dead mother I shall take her to my keeping as a most precious charge and treasure." The blind girl had stolen up to the spot, and now sat on the ground at old Bob's head, hearing all, and sobbing convulsively in her speechless grief. Judson's arm stole around her form but, in a moment she was unconscious, having fainted from excess of sorrow and surprise. She was borne at once, by kind hands, into the cabin, where she lay like one asleep—the gentle Jessie watching over her.

"There is but little mystery about this, my brother," added Old Bob—for such we may continue to call him. "The mother of Blanche came to my cabin, homeless, friendless, penniless. I took her and her child in, and they became of my household. The mother was regarded as my wife, and Blanche as my child ; and this deception I permitted, that they might have my love and protection. The mother is gone before me, and I shall soon meet her where there can be no more wrong and sorrow. Blanche I leave behind, but have no fears for her happiness, since she is beloved by a true soldier and a gentleman."

Old Loveday was silent for some moments ; then he bent over the dying man and impressed a kiss upon his forehead—the kiss of reconciliation and affection. He said :—

"I pray your forgiveness, Oscar ; I know I have been unjust to you and to the memory of our father, whose name I had discarded. I henceforth shall assume it, and shall seek to atone for the wrong I have done you by

reverence of your truth and goodness. Blanche shall be to me as my own child ; and if God wills that I may live, my days shall be passed in such deeds as I know would most delight you."

He could say no more ; tears choked his utterance, and few dry eyes were seen in the circle which surrounded them. Old Bob smiled contentedly and closed his eyes as if in sleep.

He was asleep—to waken never more in this world of pain and tribulation. The crowd around silently withdrew, leaving old Loveday—Henry Ashcroft—alone with the dead.

During the enactment of this affecting scene, Bowlegs had stood apart, as one in a dream. In his hand was the written story of his dead wife's sad life ; its perusal had turned back the tide of his past few years of turbulence, and again the old love, the olden time, surged through his memory. But quickly the part played by MacDonald came like a lightning stroke to his heart, and his face fairly quivered in its agony of commingled hate and remorse. Well was it that the monster was dead. Had he still been living, the injured husband must have brained him on the spot ; or, if he had escaped, what sweet revenge would it not have been to pursue the villain to the Everglades, and to meet him in single combat ! But he was dead, beyond the reach of a just vengeance ; and Bowlegs' anger passed away, like a tropical storm, as suddenly as it came.

Judson approached. Billy reached out his hand and gave the brave soldier a clasp of true friendliness.

"You know all, my friend," said the chief ; "can you, then, still consent to take my child to your bosom ?"

"Indeed, I see no reason for loving Blanche any the less for her sorrows; and as for her parentage, I am only too rejoiced to hear it so well authenticated. She, of course, knows nothing, as yet, as to your relationship to her, not having been informed of the revelations of that paper; but, with your permission, I will bring her hither and she shall know all."

Bowlegs was silent. A great struggle was going on in his breast—the affection of the parent and the duty he owed to her. At length he said: "Much as I desire to press the dear image of my wronged wife to my heart, I dare not permit it. My life has been so apart from hers, and I am so wedded to these savages as their ruler and leader, that my fortunes are cast with them to death. I am now conquered, and must leave the Everglades to join those of the tribe in the Upper Arkansas regions, already gone before me. To confess to her her parentage might prove the source of great unhappiness. Of that she has had only too much; and I shall depart without one kiss from her loving lips. Oh, my child, my child—my poor, wronged wife!" and the chief plunged into the adjoining shrubbery to hide the terrible grief which had broken up the long sealed fountains of his soul, and for the moment utterly prostrated him.

The soldiers at a distance, seeing this movement, would have pursued, but Judson lifted his hand in warning, and waved them back. The tears which filled his own eyes attested his compassion for the unhappy man. Billy was left to his sorrows; but, ere long, was seen down in the village, where the tribe were gathered, preparatory to the final breaking up of the settlement and emigration to the Far West. In less than a week's time, we may add, the last of the Seminoles had departed from Florida for ever,

and Billy Bowlegs thereafter passed from history. When and how he died is not known of men.

A sad yet happy procession it was which wended its way through the morasses of the Kissimmee back to Tampa Bay. It bore the body of Old Bob—Oscar Ashcroft—which loving hands prepared to consign to the earth near the spot where reposed the remains of Blanche's mother. Jessie was happy both in her return to society and in her restoration to the double love of father and lover. Weak and weary, she was tenderly cared for by all—the soldiers never tiring of bearing the litter on which she rested, after the lake and boat conveyances had to be abandoned. When she arrived at the village near the fort, so inspirited had become her spirits and strength, that she walked with ease, and soon became her old self again. Only one cause of unhappiness came. The child who had been the companion of her suffering was discovered to be the lost darling of Bill Silly. The instinct of its true mother had found it out, even in the changed circumstances of a year's absence; and Jessie was constrained to see it borne to another home—glad to see its mother's joy, but sorry to feel that it would no more call her by the endearing title of "Mamma."

Old Bob Bradley was buried beside the remains of her whose life-path he had smoothed, and whose gentle regard he had so truly treasured. Henry Ashcroft purchased the spot, now hallowed to him by touching memories, and there he resolved his home should be. The cabin was permitted to remain as the brother had left it, with all its household treasures unmoved. Jessie and Blanche occupied the room of the dead mother, and were only too glad to contribute to the happiness of the living.

But even this happiness was to be broken in upon by change—the inevitable change of young hearts, opening out into new lives, new loves, new aspirations. One sweet day—the first of the new year, when the orange buds were just preparing to put forth again, and the magnolia was awakening from its almost imperceptible sleep, Edward Judson and Charles Morris became happy husbands, and Jessie Ashcroft and Blanche happy wives. The ceremony was performed in the sweet-scented grove in front of the house, where were gathered a large concourse of spectators—officers and troops from the fort, villagers, and the hardy squatters of the entire country round about—to all of whom the parties were as much endeared as if an actual family relation existed between them and the worthy couples. It was a scene of true beauty; and, devoid of the usual rough excitement of such occasions in the South, its geniality and thoroughly-maintained good order well betokened the nature of the respect entertained for those whose nuptials they celebrated.

When all was over, Henry Ashcroft, calling his children around him, thus addressed them:—

“My children—for such you now all are—I have a word to impart to you, and a request to make. My brother Oscar, as you are aware, left the Ashcroft estate, on the Savannah, without an heir, and by law it reverted to me. I find by correspondence with the faithful agent left by Oscar in charge of the property, that it is even a larger and richer inheritance than when it passed into my brother's keeping. My heart is wedded to this spot—I shall not leave it; and to you, Edward and Charles, I desire to commit the ownership of the Savannah river estate. Here are the title deeds, duly executed by my attorney in Savannah, and signed by myself this day in

the presence of our magistrate. They place you in possession as owners of the entire property, real and personal, each taking half, by a natural division line, which cuts the large plantation into nearly equal parts. You, Charles, will take the lesser half, upon which stands the old homestead, a house large enough for you all until more shall be added to your circle. Then Edward will have to build on his section, upon a beautiful natural site, commanding a full view of the homestead grounds. Thus you will live in brotherhood, enjoying each other's society; and, being a world unto yourselves, will not have to seek abroad for the purest happiness which this world can give. Take this, and this," presenting the title deeds, "and may God, in his goodness, bless you with peace—peace—peace—such as I have never known until this moment."

He sunk upon his chair, overcome by his feelings, yet very happy in the sense of duty well performed. The gift, so princely and so utterly unexpected, overwhelmed the young people by its magnitude and the promise it gave of a united family future. With one impulse the party all sunk upon their knees before the generous parent and received again his solemn blessing.

Thus was the Ashcroft estate restored to its old glory, for three years had not passed ere it became one of the most notable and productive properties on the river. Happiness reigned over its borders—happiness in the mansion, in the negro quarters, in the fields. Henry Ashcroft had chosen well in his disposition of his daughter and his lands, if happiness was the measure of his return.

it over her eyes. A bottle was produced of an exquisitely sweet and permeating scent, with which the bandage was saturated. This done he motioned to Judson, who at once stepped forward.

"Blanche?"

"Dear Edward!"

"I have seen the light!"

The stranger said nothing; but producing a piece of paper he wrote in French: "Keep her in darkness one half moon; give her light gradually one half moon, and she is with you for ever after. *Allah el Allah!*"

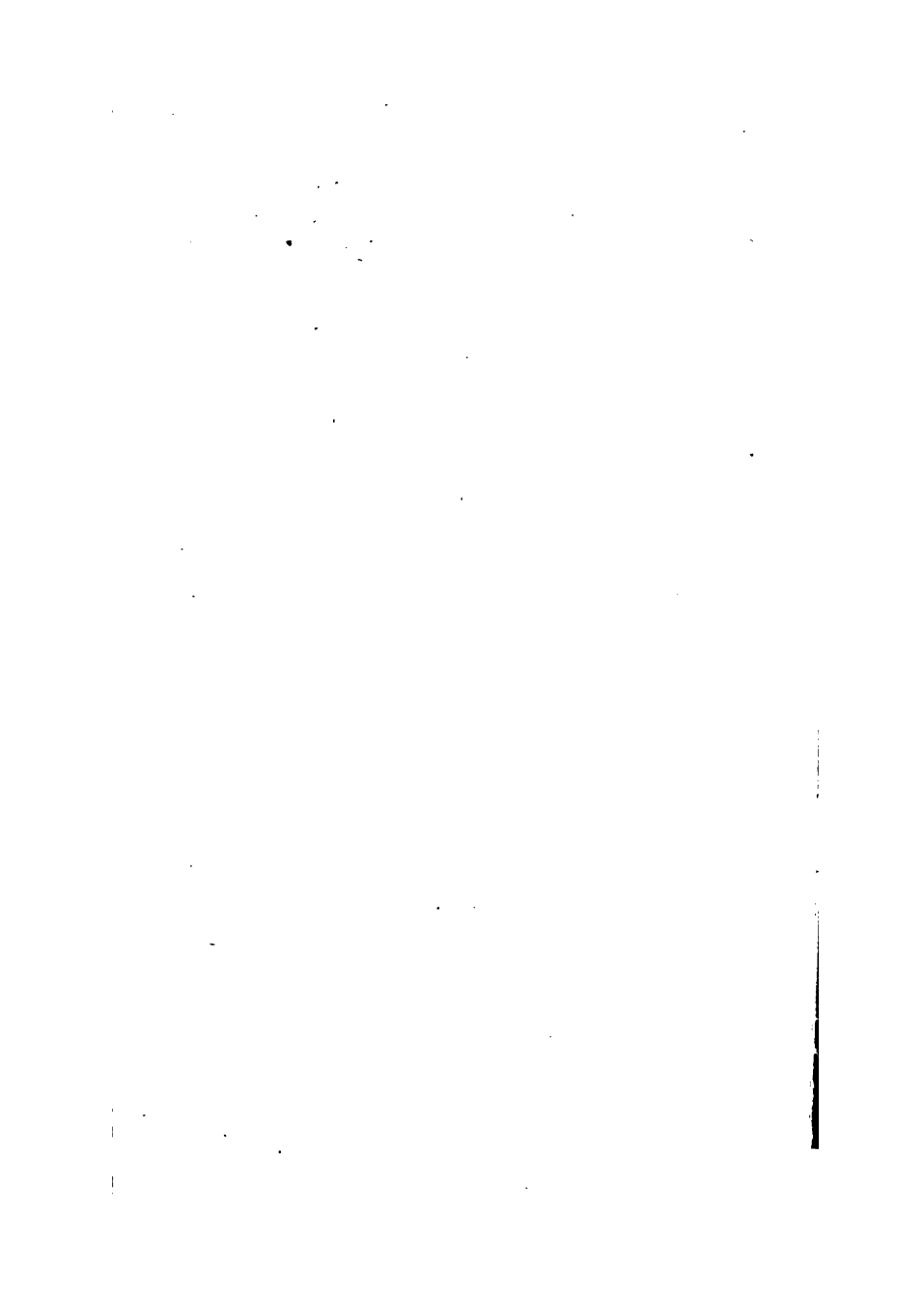
This was all. He went down the pathway, and was never seen after taking the steamer at the landing. Whither he came or whither he went is only known to the mysterious one who sent him to heal the daughter of William Montgomery.

The new moon grew old, and a new moon came again, to behold Blanche Judson restored to sight and a new life.

"A miracle!" said the superstitious.

"A charlatan's dodge!" said the incredulous.

"An angel's visit!" said the happy husband, who treasures that silk bandage and the quaint bottle with the Arabic inscription upon its label as very precious souvenirs.





66

ON THE DEEP;

OR,

THE MISSIONARY'S DAUGHTER.

A STORY OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

By ROGER STARBUCK,
AUTHOR OF "GOLDEN HARPOON," ETC., ETC.

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ON THE DEEP.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAIR PASSENGER.

THE anchor was atrip; the sails were sheeted and hoisted; the "Stars and Stripes" danced up to the mizzen-gaff; a parting salute was fired, and then, catching the breeze upon her starboard quarter, away she went—the bark Rainbow, of New York—bowling out of the harbour of Maui, Sandwich Islands, homeward bound. Leaning against the weather-rail, stood a young girl of eighteen, Grace Greenville by name, watching the lessening shores with melancholy interest. Her cheek was pale, and tears were in her soft brown eyes; for, fast fading from her gaze, was the little wooden church, behind which lay the recently-buried remains of her father, "the old Missionary." Grace, who had lived with him upon the island ever since her tenth year, was, by his death, left an orphan, her mother having died before he sailed from his native shores. She had taken passage in the Rainbow, in compliance with his last wish that she should sail for New York, and seek her only living relative, her father's sister, who often had written to him that she would be glad of the society of her niece.

But no thought of her aunt, or of her native land, could now find room in the mind of the grief-stricken girl. She was thinking of the little green mound in the churchyard, and of the calm face beneath—the old

benevolent face, that so often had smiled upon her in the cottage among the cocoa-nuts. She was leaving them now, never, probably, to see them again. Her tears flowed faster and faster as the familiar shores receded; but the pitiless winds were heedless of her sorrow; they filled the sails, and mockingly whistled among the shrouds. The land grew more and more indistinct; at last it seemed to fade away in a blue mist. Then, stifling a sob, the young girl buried her face in her hands.

Her grief did not escape the attention of the officers. The captain, a plump, weather-beaten old sea-dog, moved toward her, intending to make an effort at consolation; but he was prevented by his first mate, Mr. Block, who confronted him with a solemn shake of the head, and a warning motion of the hand. Never having been married, the skipper had great faith in the knowledge of woman-kind possessed by a man who, like Block, had buried three wives; so, moving on tip-toe to the lee side of the quarter-deck, he beckoned the mate to his side, anxious to learn the cause of his mysterious pantomime, which, he doubted not, was connected with some wonderful secret of the female heart.

It may be as well to state here, that the mate, while exceedingly vain of his knowledge of the gentler sex, prided himself still more upon what he was pleased to term his "‘th’rough’ acquaintance with Walker’s Dictionary," an old copy of which was always kept upon a shelf near his berth, within easy reach of his hand when he retired. From this volume he was in the habit of committing to memory such lengthy and high-sounding words as, in his opinion, would dignify his conversation, and impress his auditors with the belief that he was a man of profound wisdom and erudition. Unfortunately,

however, he never deemed it necessary to learn the definitions of the words selected; and the result of this neglect was that they were as much out of place in the expressions he used, as plums would have been in sea-biscuits, or delicate sauces served up with tough pieces of salt junk. Their effect was rendered all the more striking by faulty pronunciation, and by their coming from a mouth twisted considerably to one side from long and constant use of the weed. Moreover, the feature was surmounted by a "club" nose, which divided a pair of hard matter-of-fact eyes, so accustomed to looking to windward, that every spark of intellectual fire had been, if I may be allowed the expression, extinguished by the sea breeze.

Moving his head slowly and mysteriously from side to side, this worthy now placed one hand upon the captain's shoulder, and with the other pointed significantly toward the fair orphan, occasionally opening his mouth as though about to speak, and then shutting it in an emphatic manner. Profoundly affected, wrought up to the very highest pitch of expectation, the skipper at length could contain himself no longer.

"Out with it," he whispered, eagerly. "Ay, ay, Block, now is your time—out with it."

"Mark my words, then," responded the mate, "and mark me well, Captain Capstan. Never, when them kind is a-worrying, should they be introduced upon. Consequences the most awful might resolve from it. Trying to smother her affections, she'd sure to break the heart of her!"

"Why, bless me!—no—you don't say! God bless the poor thing!" cried the captain, anxiously. "And Block," he added, placing a hand upon the other's wrist, "it's lucky you're here. I won't give in to any man where

seamanahip's consarned, but woman's different—ay, ay, woman's your forty (*forte*) Block !”

The mate bowed with the air of a man to whom compliments of this description were quite familiar. He took the captain's proffered arm, and the two begun to pace the deck, treading very softly, that they might not disturb the young girl.

“I'm struck with the idea,” whispered the skipper, “that we ought to contrive in some way—by our dress for a ‘sample’—to show our sympathy for this poor orphan. These checked shirts are hardly the thing. What would be the most proper dress, Block ?”

“Something black,” responded the mate, emphatically, “we must dress in black—every man of us officers. Black's the badger of mourning—black coats, black vests, black pants, and hats. And we must *wear* our hats, Captain Capstan, so as to have everything in symphony.”

“That's all well enough, Block, except about the hats. Blow me if I hardly think—”

“Ay !” interrupted the mate, “that's the most impervious p'int of all. We must wear them hats at the table, Capstan, or all the rest goes for nothing. Your hair is grey, mine is red, and the second mate's is brown, which would be an awful dissembling of gay colours to show to a lass that's just lost her father. Whereas, if they be rendered indivisible by our black hats, we have our badgers of mourning complete. She'll depreciate it all,” added Block, with a mysterious gleam in his eyes, “her complex little heart, with all its womanly miseries of affection, is as well known to me as the dictionary.”

“You are right—you are right—I do believe !” said Capstan, rubbing his hands. “Your knowledge of the feminine community is wonderful, Block.”

"And now," said the latter, "I'll go forward and inform that youngster of our contentions; otherwise he'll be a-rigging himself up, thinking to produce an appreciation upon our orphan."

The youngster spoken of was Guy Loring, the second mate—a hardy, fine looking fellow of twenty-three years, and a native of Nantucket. Though he had spent more than a third of this period at sea, yet he was a very intelligent young man, having devoted every leisure moment to the reading of instructive and entertaining books; so that he formed an example, by no means uncommon, of an inferior officer better educated than those above him in authority. Men of classical acquirements are often found amongst the foremast hands of war vessels, and sometimes even among the crews of merchantmen. A professor of languages, who, from a love of adventure, had shipped in the Rainbow as a common sailor, had commenced to instruct the second mate in some of the higher branches of knowledge, and, to say the least, there had as yet been no lack either of attention or application on the part of the pupil.

At that moment, however, he could spare no time to think of books. He was superintending the work of lashing the anchor, and stowing the cable—now and then lending a helping hand. Thus engaged, he was not aware of the presence of Block—who had glided forward—until he heard the voice of that worthy behind him.

"You'll wear black at dinner to-day, Mr. Loring, and keep your hair indivisible by means of your beaver, which is not to be taken off at the table."

A marlinespike dropped from Loring's hand to the deck.

He turned and eyed the mate with astonishment.

"Why not, sir?"

"For symphony," responded Block; "that poor girl needs it, God knows; being left an orphan, and all alone here among us rough nauticals, not one of which she's ever seen before with the acceptance of Capstan, who was very lightly acquainted with the mushroomery."

"With what, sir?"

"The missionary," suggested the professor of languages, who just then passed behind the two men, dragging a portion of the cable with his chain-hook.

"Oh! but why are we to wear our hats, Mr. Block? It seems to me—"

"Because," interrupted the mate, "we must have everything black. It'll have a smoothing influence upon her; she'll depreciate our delicacy."

So saying he returned to the quarter-deck.

Grace had by this time quitted it, and sought the solitude of her little apartment. She was seated upon a cushioned chair, turning over the leaves of her Bible, and deriving consolation from its pages. Half an hour afterwards she heard a knocking at her door. She opened it to confront the steward, who, in obedience to orders, wore a full suit of black, even to his hat, the crown of which was very high, and shaped something like a pyramid.

"Dinner's ready, Miss," he said, in a mournful voice, "ready and waiting."

She entered the state-room, and took her place at the table. Opposite to her sat the captain and his mate, attired in black broadcloth, with the rims of their beavers pulled down over their eyebrows. The features of both were twisted into an expression of deep solemnity, which seemed wholly out of place on faces so plump and rosy.

The captain did the honours of the table with a gravity in keeping with his melancholy looks ; but Grace scarcely tasted of the food put before her. She felt too sad to eat ; and yet she could not help noticing that everybody she saw wore a black suit, and kept his hat on. This surprised her not a little ; and she was much perplexed when Block, pulling up the cuffs of his coat, as though about to engage in some pugilistic encounter, addressed her in the following mysterious manner :—

"On the present occasion of consoling, which Capstan and I tender in a way we hope will meet with your fair depreciation, we deign to offer our supreme regrets that Mr. Loring being indisposed to finish a job about the anchor, has not been able to share with us in this convivial symphony, which, it is to be hoped, you'll find delicate."

"You are very kind," said Grace, looking exceedingly puzzled.

"Ay, ay, blow me, Block, but that was a masterly stroke!" cried Capstan, bringing the end of his knife-handle upon the table with great force. "And Miss Greenville," he added, addressing her in a voice of emotion, "we would lay down our lives for you—every man of us ! Block, here, whose knowledge of women is wonderful, can divine all your wants, for which we hope to 'provide' satisfactorily."

"My knowledge of females," said the mate, by way of explanation, "isn't so much the result of insinuation as it is of experiment."

The young girl, after thanking both for their sympathy and good wishes, made her way to the quarter-deck. She looked in the direction of the islands, and saw a mass of dark, sulphurous-looking clouds. She noticed, too, that

the wind had nearly died away, and that the sails were flapping heavily against the masts. Loring, who had come aft to give some order to the man at the wheel, approached her in a deferential manner.

"Miss Greenville," he said, lifting his hat and bowing respectfully, "I hope you will pardon me, a stranger, for speaking to you, but I could never forgive myself were I not to explain the meaning of the singular spectacle you have just witnessed below. I would not have you think for the world that there is a man in this craft rude enough to wound your feelings intentionally—"

"Oh no, sir," interrupted Grace, with a sweet but melancholy smile, "I know there is not; and I feel very grateful for the kind way in which I have already been treated."

"And yet," said the young man, "you must have been hurt by the seeming want of respect shown by Block and Capstan, in wearing their hats before you at the table."

"Indeed, sir, I was not," she replied. "Though I will not deny that I was surprised. I have no doubt that they had some good reason for keeping their hats on."

Loring then proceeded to explanations, concluding with the earnest assurance that he had tried very hard to persuade the two officers to abandon their ridiculous plan.

Before Grace could reply, a distant noise, like the humming of a swarm of bees, became perceptible. Turning their eyes toward the mass of clouds to windward, they saw too great columns of hazy vapour rolling round and round, as if upon invisible pivots, and sweeping toward the vessel with great rapidity. The tops of these gigantic pillars were among the clouds, from which they sloped downward to the sea. The water beneath and around

them was lashed into foam, and the spray could be seen leaping high above the waves, as though it was scooped up by a terrific whirlwind.

The young officer hastily quitted the side of his fair companion.

"Hands by the halliards! In with royals and to'gallant sails!" he shouted, in a voice that rung through every corner of the bark.

The lighter canvas was clewed in and furled. The fore and mizen topsails were next stowed, after being double-reefed; and very soon the vessel's canvas was reduced to a close-reefed maintopsail, single-reefed foresail and foretopmast staysail. By this time every breath of air around the bark seemed to have died away. The atmosphere was almost stifling. There was not a wrinkle in either of the three sails. And yet, not quite a league off the weather-quarter, the approaching tempest raged and howled with terrific fury. The two gigantic pillars had dissolved in the rack and mist of the storm. A far-extending network of driving rain; torn masses of black vapour, driven hither and thither; the overhanging clouds, rolling and mingling in dark, sulphurous volumes, and the crests of the waves, whirled into spray by the lashing winds, formed a strange contrast with the clear sky and sunny waters to leeward.

Block and Capstan, who had come on deck while the men were shortening sail, stood near the mizzen-mast, alternately glancing aloft and to windward.

"I don't like the look of that main to'gallant mast and yard," the captain at length said to his mate. "I think you had best send 'em down."

Block gave the required order, and such of the men as were not engaged in lashing the boats, battening down

the hatches, &c., &c., darted aloft to obey. Just as the top yard and mast were lowered to the deck, the foremost cloud of the storm passed over the vessel. The rigging hummed like a top; a scarcely perceptible shiver seemed to run through every timber: the three sails filled with a noise like the report of a musket.

"Now, then—steady as you are—there—at—the—wheel!" cried Capstan, in a voice something like the prolonged howl of a wolf.

Whiz-z-z-z!—burr-r-r-r!—hoo-oo-oo!—whish-sh-sh!—came the storm, bursting upon the bark with a perfect avalanche of driving rain, and with hurricane gusts that drove Grace into the companion-way, down which she retreated with all possible haste. The stout vessel fell upon her beam ends; her swaying masts creaked complainingly; her timbers groaned as though about to part; torrents of water came pouring over her lee bulwarks; she was hurled, rather than driven, through a vortex of boiling, hissing waves, that threw clouds of spray even to her topsail yards. The maintopsail and the foresail broke loose from their sheets, and after flapping wildly about for a moment were torn to shreds. The foretopmast stays and weather foretopmast shrouds, parting almost simultaneously, the mast went over the side with a loud crash. The maintopmast followed, and immediately afterward down came the mizzen. Men with axes darted forward and aft to clear the wreck, but the bark rolled and plunged so violently, that a long time elapsed before this task was accomplished.

Soon the fury of the tempest begun to abate; the wind, hauling round to the north-east, however still blew a heavy gale, which the captain predicted would last for several days. As he could neither return to the islands

nor repair damages during the present state of the weather, he was obliged to set a single-reefed mainsail, and put his vessel before the wind, or on a south-west course. This he pursued for three days, at the end of which time the gale fell away to a light breeze; an occurrence that greatly delighted all hands, who were much exhausted with constant watchfulness and hard work at the pumps.

In the evening, Capstan called his crew aft, and informed them that they should be allowed quarter-watches during the night, as he wanted them to be in good condition at daylight, to begin the work of getting up spare topmasts and yards. The men cheered and went forward, while Loring, who had charge of the first-watch, commenced pacing the quarter-deck. The shadows of night now had settled around the bark; the moon was veiled by leaden-coloured clouds; the gloom was almost impenetrable. The young man, as soon as his brother-officers had gone below, stepped to the binnacle to look at the compass. The vessel still was heading south-west, but not moving faster than at the rate of two or three knots. He walked to the weather-rail, and, leaning carelessly against it, the vision of a sweet young face glided into his mind. It was that of Grace Greenville, which through all the late perils had worn a saint-like expression of resignation and fortitude, varied only by glances of deep sympathy often directed toward the hardy fellows, who, with drenched garments, worked so manfully at the pumps. Fearing, however, that his pleasant reverie might make him forgetful of duty as officer of the watch, the second-mate interrupted it by moving quickly along the lee gangway.

"Tom Green," he shouted to the man on the look-out, "I hope you are wide-awake there?"

No answer was returned, and on gaining the knight-heads Loring discovered that the man was fast asleep—the poor fellow being completely worn out with his late exertions. Under different circumstances, the second mate would have roused the sailor with a rough shake and a sharp reprimand; but he now resolved to allow him to sleep an hour longer before disturbing him. He seated himself upon the spritsail-yard to keep a look-out in his place until the time of grace should have expired. The gloom, as said, was nearly impenetrable; yet, as he glanced off the lee-bow, he thought he could distinguish the outline of some dark object gliding swiftly across the water. It was apparently not far from the vessel, and, to obtain a better view, he sprung to his feet. The object, or rather the outline, now disappeared, and believing either that his imagination had deceived him, or that the vision was nothing more than a large sea-bird, he returned to his seat. At this moment—perhaps influenced by a bad dream—the slumberer on the knight-heads groaned and rolled over upon his back. Loring, who believed that the sailor was suffering from nightmare, roused him at once. The man rose, and, in a confused manner, began an apology for sleeping at his post; but the second mate quietly assured him that he should not punish him on this occasion.

"You will not deprive me of my watch below, nor give me extra work?"

"No."

"Thank you, sir. I will never again close my eyes while on duty, if I die for it."

"That's right, Tom; I know you'll keep your word," answered Guy, as he moved away.

He walked to the binnacle, and a second time looked

at the compass. The vessel was heading steadily upon her course ; the trusty helmsman, an old sailor, by the *sobriquet* of Ben Ringbolt, handled the wheel in a manner which gave perfect satisfaction to the officer of the watch. Having exchanged a few remarks with the old man, he stepped to the weather-side of the deck, and seated himself upon the carpenter's chest, facing the forward part of the craft. Not ten minutes had elapsed when he fancied that the vessel's head was falling off. He rose and peered eagerly forward to assure himself that such was the case, being slow to believe that a steersman like Ben would allow the bark to swing even a quarter of a point from her proper course. Very soon, however, his doubts were removed ; he turned quickly upon his heel.

"What's the matter there at the wheel ? Where are you going to ?" he shouted.

There came no response.

The binnacle, which concealed the face of the steersman, was about ten yards from where the second mate stood. He cleared this space with a couple of bounds, and was beginning to address the sailor in an angry manner, when something peculiar in his attitude arrested the words. The old tar stood motionless, with his head bowed upon his breast ; with his arms drooping over the wheel. Loring's first thought was that he had been attacked with a fit of apoplexy. He laid him gently upon the deck with one arm, while putting down the wheel with the other ; but the next moment a cry of horror escaped him. A handkerchief about the man's neck having become loosened, his throat was revealed covered with blood, and disfigured by an ugly-looking gash near the windpipe !

CHAPTER II.

BLOCK GOES TO RECONSIDER.

THAT the unfortunate man had not inflicted the stab with his own hand, the second mate became convinced, after he had examined the sheath-knife attached to the sailor's belt. This, the only weapon in his possession, showed no trace of blood.

Who, then, was the author of the crime?

Surely no man in the ship, for Ringbolt had been loved and respected by all. There certainly was some strange mystery connected with the deed. It must have been perpetrated in a very stealthy manner, since Loring had known nothing of it until now, though he had been sitting within ten yards of the binnacle. He quitted the spot and summoned the four men of the watch; but they could give him no clue to the fearful secret. They hung over the dead body, lost in speechless astonishment and wonder.

The young man now stationed a sailor at the wheel, and moved toward the companionway, intending to rouse the captain, when he encountered Grace as she came hurriedly from the cabin. She stopped on seeing him, and he placed himself before her, to screen the body of Ringbolt from her view. He noticed that she was pale and agitated, that the hand which she placed upon his arm trembled like a leaf.

"Something has occurred to alarm you," he cried.

"Yes," she replied, with a shudder, "I have seen a face, an evil-looking face, peering at me through the cabin-window."

"How long ago was that?"

"Not more than five minutes. It terrified me so much

that I shrunk back into a corner, where I remained until it had disappeared."

Loring started.

"You are sure that your imagination—"

"Oh! yes," she interrupted, "I am sure that I was not deceived. I saw the face distinctly by the light of the cabin-lamp. The features, if I mistake not, were those of a Malay."

"Ay, ay, and Ringbolt's murderer," Loring added, mentally; "this is all strange enough."

He gently drew the young girl within the shadow of the companionway. Still anxious to screen from her gaze the dead body, lying so stark and cold near the binnacle, with the rays of the lamp falling full upon its blood-stained throat. Walking to the rail, he peered into the gloom that covered the sea; but he saw nothing except the faint outlines of the waves that rippled around the vessel. Had not the darkness partially concealed his face, when he returned to her side, Grace might have seen a troubled, uneasy expression in his eyes.

"Your mysterious visitor will not come again, I trust," he said, with assumed indifference, "as we shall be on the watch for him."

"But why did he come at all? and can you form any idea from whence he came?" she inquired.

"To be frank with you," he replied, "I have my suspicions; it remains to be proved that they are correct."

"And these suspicions?"

"Miss Greenville," he replied, in a low, earnest voice, "you must pardon me for refusing to express them to you now. Daylight, or perhaps a few hours, will, I think, clear up the mystery."

Though somewhat alarmed, yet she did not pursue her

inquiries. She retired to her apartment, and Loring made his way to the captain's berth.

A sailor is easily waked. Loring's hand had scarcely touched Capstan's shoulder, when he started and opened his eyes. The second mate briefly described what had happened.

"Ben Ringbolt murdered? A face looking in at the cabin-window? Why, bless me lad, here's the dogs to pay!" cried the skipper, springing from his bunk. "You had better wake Block."

The mate was roused, and the three men soon were on deck. After the body of Ringbolt had been wrapped in a blanket and placed on the carpenter's bench in the waist, Capstan moved to the quarter-deck, and motioned his two mates to his side.

"Well, Block, what do you think of this piece of business?"

"It's a mystical proceeding," responded the mate. "In a word, it's a malignant mystery that seems hard to fathom. But it must be invested without delay. You may depend upon it, there's other Malays around besides the one that was seen."

"That's hardly to be disputed," replied Capstan; "and Ringbolt was probably murdered by that villain to prevent his giving the alarm. The rascal must have had a light foot and a quick arm to do this without Loring's seeing or hearing him."

"I have no doubt," said the second mate, "that, if it were not for the darkness, we would see some kind of a vessel—the one to which the murderer belongs—lying not far from our own craft. You doubtless remember that, while we were in the harbour of Maui, the captain of the Spanish brig *St. Mary* informed us that he had

been chased by a suspicious-looking schooner, a few days before his arrival at the island."

"That's logicity!" cried Block, "ay, ay, every word of it. Depend upon it, Loring is right; and the Malay, I believe, was a sort of scout sent to reconsider us by his cut-throat captain, who saw our light a-shining in the distance, but was, of course, unable to make out our characteristics in the dark."

"In that case, we may expect an attack at any moment," said Capstan, twitching his forelock uneasily. "We must be prepared, Block."

"There's a box of cutlasses in the run," responded the mate; "besides which we have a few old pikes, two or three muskets, and a couple of revolvers. With them, considerin' that we have twelve good stout fellows in all, we may make some show of persistence."

"That depends upon the number opposed to us," replied the skipper. "We'll fight, however, as hard and as long as we can, for, if our enemies are Malays, we can expect no quarter."

"Not a bit of it," returned Block. "Them fellows have a most superfluous taste for blood. Shall I rouse up the men, sir?"

"Ay, ay, and get up the arms, and distribute 'em, as soon as possible."

These orders were promptly executed; after which good lookouts were stationed about the ship. Not knowing the exact whereabouts of the suspected craft, Capstan then hauled up his mainsail and lay to. This was scarcely done, when the lookout forward reported a light directly ahead, and apparently about the distance of a league. The skipper looked at it through his night-glass, but the instrument being damaged, afforded him no assistance.

"It's probably the vessel," said Block; "p'raps we'd better ware ship and show our heels—that is to say, what little we have left," he added, glancing disconsolately toward the stumps of the three masts.

"No," Capstan answered, decidedly, "we will not wear, for, in my opinion, that light is shown from some boat in order to deceive us. Otherwise, why should it be shown at all?"

"Light, ho!" cried at this moment one of the look-outs stationed in the after part of the vessel.

"Where away?" shouted Capstan.

"Off the weather-quarter."

"Another one!" cried Block. "Blow me but there's something incredulously suspicious about that!"

As he spoke, both lights were suddenly extinguished.

"How now, Block? What do you think that means?"

"It's sartainly an anatomical pantomime," responded the mate; "but I think I can resolve it. One of them lights was that of the Malay, adrift in his boat, and the other that of the vessel. They were signalizing to—"

"Light, ho!" shouted another lookout; "right astern, about a league distant."

"A third light!" cried Block and Capstan, in the same breath.

"The rascals are up to some infarnal trick," continued the skipper, "and I'd give considerable to know what it is."

He gazed steadily toward the light, until it was suddenly extinguished.

"A boat should be sent to reconsider," said the mate. "They may be a-preparing some kind of a trap for us. If you say the word, I'll take the cutter and go."

"Ay, ay, that's a good idea. But be careful, Block,

be careful. We haven't any men to lose. They must put their arms in the boat, and must muffle their oars."

These orders were obeyed, after which the little craft was cautiously lowered. Four men, who had been selected for the crew, then took their places, and, carefully plying their oars, the boat glided off into the darkness.

Block steered toward that quarter in which the last light—the one astern—had been seen. Owing to the precautions taken, the boat made but little noise: the mate issued his orders in whispers; there was no conversation among the men. They had proceeded in this manner for about a quarter of an hour, when Block suddenly leaned forward and peered eagerly ahead. He fancied he could distinguish the outline of some object at no great distance. He was soon enabled to make out the form of a man seated in a canoe, and he doubted not that this was Ringbolt's murderer—the Malay. He ordered his men to pull more softly, and turning his head at the same instant, the occupant of the canoe saw the approaching boat. He seized his paddles and urged his light craft through the water with extraordinary swiftness.

"Ay, ay, there he goes!" cried Block, "a-running away from us. A 'guilty conscience makes cowards of all.' Pull ahead, lads, long, strong, and steady; we'll soon have him under our jurisprudence."

The men laid back to their oars with a will, and the boat flew swiftly on in the wake of the fugitive.

Having had the start of his pursuers, however, and his vessel being much lighter than theirs, it was some time before the distance between them began to diminish. The course pursued by the mate soon brought the bark's

lantern some distance off his starboard quarter—that is to say, nearly opposite to the right side of his boat. It struck him that the Malay did not now put forth so much exertion as he had previously done, and believing that exhaustion was the cause, he encouraged his men with hopes of a speedy termination of the chase.

“Pull ahead, lads—pull ahead! A few more strokes, and the criminality will be in our possession.”

The men strained every muscle—the boat flew onward with arrowy speed; it was soon within a few feet of the canoe.

The mate now ordered his men to jump up and stand by, to seize the Malay. Placing their oars apeak, they sprang from their thwarts to obey, but before they could turn, the fugitive, uttering a peculiar cry, directed his canoe to one side, and the boat shot past it.

Directly ahead of him, Block then heard the heavy splashing of oars, and made out the scarcely perceptible outlines of human figures.

A clear, musical voice greeted his ears the next moment.

“Boat, ahoy! if you try to escape us it will be the worse for you!”

He remained for a few seconds speechless with astonishment: the men stood motionless, waiting for orders.

“Ay, ay,” cried the mate at last, as he caught sight of nearly twenty forms seated in a longboat, “bless me, if this ain’t a wonderful dispensary of Providence, the meeting with them villains in this unexpected manner. Down men!—down to your oars, and pull like thunderbolts!”

The crew needed no second bidding. They seized their

oars—the mate whirled the boat's head toward the bark—and away they went. Turning his head, Block saw the canoe moving toward the other boat. A moment later, the crashing of small arms was heard, and a shower of leaden missiles flew about the heads of himself and his crew.

“Stretch to your oars, men! Stretch for your lives! Another volley, and some of you may be sent to the everlasting ‘bosom of destruction!’ Spring my blades! spring with a will!”

A few minutes afterward, he looked behind him again, when, to his surprise, he could see nothing of his pursuers, though the dip of their oars was audible off his quarter. Believing that they had given up the chase, he ordered his men to “slacken” their exertions, and pull a long easy stroke.

“I must preserve your muscle, my lads,” said he, “as much as I can, for I think you’ll need it, eloquently, in a few hours.”

“Beg pardon, sir,” said old Tom Rocket, the bow oarsman, “but it seems to me that them rascals are a-trying to head us off—to get between us and the bark. The sound of their oars was off our quarter a minute ago—it’s now off our bow.”

Block inclined his head to one side, and listening attentively soon concluded that the man was right; so he again ordered the crew to put forth all their strength at the oars. They had not proceeded far, however, when the shadowy outlines of the longboat and its occupants were seen directly ahead, and approaching rapidly.

“Ay, ay, we’re cut off from our craft now, sure enough,” growled the mate, as he whirled the boat round, “but we’ll make them cut-throats respire a little before

they come up with us. So spring ahead, men—spring ahead!"

The course now pursued by the two boats, carried them toward the quarter where the first light had been seen. The mate's crew strained every muscle, but it soon became evident that their pursuers were fast gaining on them. In the course of half an hour, the two boats were not more than nine or ten yards apart, and Block was preparing a whole "volley" of learned words to discharge at the Malays, when, not far ahead, looming up through the gloom, he saw the outlines of masts and yards.

"Luff up there aboard the schooner, and lie to!" was shouted from the pursuing boat, in the same musical voice that previously had startled Block and his men, "I'll put some prisoners aboard, directly, to be strung up at the yard-arm!"

Some moments elapsed before the order was obeyed, by which time the schooner had forged so far ahead, that in luffing up, she came between the two vessels, bringing her own boat abreast the starboard main rigging, and the other directly beneath her fore-chains, on the larboard, or opposite side. The mate was not slow to take advantage of this manœuvre. Hearing the sound of the oars of his pursuers, as they pulled round the schooner's stern to seek him, he directed the cutter toward her bows, and crossed them, thus getting far ahead of the longboat, on a course that led him toward the Rainbow.

"Ay, ay, we've just sarved 'em an indigenous trick," cried Block, as the shouts and yells of rage from his foes were borne to his ears. There's nothing like intrigue, my lads. If they catch us now, I'm willing to swing for it!"

For some reason or other the schooner did not join in the pursuit, and the crew of the longboat gave up the

chase when the fugitives were within half a mile of the bark.

CHAPTER III.

A FIGHT IN THE DARK.

"WE are sartainly in a bad fix !" said Capstan, after his mate had described to him the result of his expedition. "How many men do you think that schooner can muster for an attack?"

"About thirty; and when we're 'attackled,' it will probably be by two boats' crews, to say nothing of the peppering we'll get from the guns of the vessel, for, in my opinion, she has a few guns aboard."

"And we have nothing of that sort except an old eight-pounder," growled Capstan. "That gale was a bad thing for us, Block, as it's crippled us so we can't escape. I haven't any doubts that we'll have to fight before morning."

"Ay, ay, sir, and its pretty easy to interrogate the result. Them dusky rascals will show us no quarter. They have a most intrinsic taste for blood. They'd cut a dozen throats for the sake of an old piece of copper, or a few nails."

"We must try to avoid an attack as long as we can," said the skipper, "and something may turn up in our favour; another craft, perhaps, which may consent to assist us, and—"

"But how can this be done?" queried the mate.

"By getting up jury masts at once. We have plenty of spare spars and canvas. We may contrive, in this way, to edge off some considerable distance from the schooner in the dark."

"A good plan, 'previding' we can do this without being discovered," returned Block, "but that canoe humbug is, I dare say, even now somewhere on the lookout."

"We will try at any rate, and see what we can do!"

Accordingly, all hands, with the exception of the look-outs, were set to work. The ship's lanterns afforded such poor light, however, that it was a long time before the first spar was hoisted to the stump of the mainmast. Just as the men were preparing to secure it, a bright flash was seen off the lee bow; a loud report followed, and the next moment a ten-pound shot went howling over the heads of the sailors.

"Confound the rascals," growled Block, between his set teeth, "I thought things would turn out in this way. There's an end to our getting up jury-masts, Captain Capstan. They've been reconsidering us again, and know what we're about."

"Ay, ay," roared Capstan, savagely; "and they're a sneaking pack of thieves. If I had a few more men, I'd venture to board and carry the schooner!"

"Good!" exclaimed the professor of languages, who had been stationed near the tackle to help hoist the spar, "very good!"

As he spoke, he wound an old red comforter tightly about his wasp-like waist, and emphatically tapped the handle of his cutlass.

In addition to the comforter, he wore patched duck trousers, a red shirt, and an old smoking-cap, which articles he thought gave him something of the air of a piratical desperado. His shipmates might have thought so too, had not his figure borne some resemblance to a pair of tongs. His nose was not very warlike, either,

being curved like a trumpet, and bridged by a pair of green spectacles.

Capstan looked at him with a grim smile.

"I tell you what it is, my man," he said, in a gruff voice, "don't let me catch you shirking when we come to close quarters with them cut-throats; I rather think you've got too much l'arning to be very spunky!" -

"*Nous verrons !*" cried the professor, gnashing his teeth ferociously; "yes, sir, only give me a chance, and we shall see!"

"Ay, ay, Capstan, 'new-for-wrong' is the word!" exclaimed Block, in a mournful voice. "I wouldn't have thought that you'd have made sich an insinuation upon us that happen to have a little extra l'arning, and I repeat that it's a decisive 'new-for-wrong'!"

Before the skipper could frame a reply, there followed another flash, another report, and a second shot was heard as it struck the bark alongside of her cutwater, just as her bows were lifted by a swell. The ball went crashing through her timbers, and with a roaring noise the water poured through the opening thus made.

"She's a gone case, now!" cried Capstan—"the poor little Rainbow! She'll soon go down, and the only consolation is that them fellows have bit off their own noses! Get all the provision, and as many other useful articles into the boats as you can, Block."

He spoke calmly, but the moisture gathered in his eyes as he looked round the decks of a craft in which he had performed many a good voyage. The boats, two in number, consisting of the launch and the cutter, were ready for lowering by the time Grace Greenville, who had been informed by Loring of what had happened, came up from the cabin. The young man took his place by her

side, and cheered her with hopeful words, for he knew that she felt more alarm than she expressed.

The ship was settling fast ; her bulwarks forward were already partially submerged. Capstan gave the order to lower away. The boats struck the water simultaneously; after Grace had been helped to a comfortable seat which the second mate had prepared for her in the cutter, they were manned.

"Pull ahead!" was next ordered, and the two vessels were pushed from the side of the sinking bark.

"Quite an adventure, this," remarked the professor of languages, "it will make an interesting item for my journal."

"The less said about that, Green Specs, the better," growled an old sea-dog, who pulled the cutter's midship oar. "I've seen you take that log-book from your shirt-bosom more than once to-night ; but you may have some 'hightems' pretty soon, mate, of a sort that you'll never have a chance to put down!"

"I doubt it," returned the professor, "I prophesy that I shall live to have my journal published."

"Never mind about your jarnal, Quill," cried Capstan, "but just mind your stroke!"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Quill ; but even as he spoke, his oar, slipping from his grasp, threw him backward from his thwart.

Before the skipper could give way to the anger excited by this "lubberly" accident, a succession of fierce yells and imprecations from the bark caused him to turn his head. The outlines of the vessel were still faintly visible, and a number of lanterns, moving to and fro about her decks, proclaimed that she was already boarded by the sea-robbers.

"Howl on, you infarnal villains!" roared Capstan. "Them shrieks of yours are as music to my ears, for they show that you are baffled. You'll get no plunder out of the poor little Rainbow!"

He had scarcely concluded when the Malays were heard dropping into their boats. These, two in number, were distinguished a moment later darting in the wake of the bark's crew. Grace shuddered with terror; the boat-lanterns revealed the ashy paleness of her features. Involuntarily she drew closer to Loring's side.

"Have no fear," said he, "we might give 'em a lengthy chase, but they'll not pursue us very long. They will soon return to the schooner."

"And then the schooner will chase us, will it not?"

"Doubtless; but I dare say we will contrive to elude her in the dark."

"God help us all!" murmured the young girl. "It is dreadful, Mr. Loring, for your men to have to work so hard after the fatigues they have already undergone."

"Men under circumstances like the present, Miss Greenville, do not feel the effects of the very hardest kind of work until it is over, and—"

A crash was heard; a flash lighted for an instant the dark faces of the Malays in the foremost of the pursuing boats; a volley of bullets whizzed about the heads of the cutter's crew. One of the missiles severed a lock of the young girl's hair and grazed her temple.

Loring sprung from his thwart, and stood behind her to shield her person with his own form.

"No, no, I will not permit that!" she cried, anxiously, "sit down again, I implore you, or you will certainly get shot!"

The second mate smiled.

"I beg your pardon," said he; "but I shall disobey you this time. I don't think you need be alarmed, however, those fellows are miserable marksmen; besides which, the darkness is in our favour. I hardly think they will fire again. Ah!" he added, as a roaring, gurgling noise was heard astern, and the bark's lantern suddenly seemed to dive out of sight in the water. "There she goes, the noble Rainbow—she has made her last plunge!"

Capstan sighed heavily, and clenched his fists.

"Ah! but I'd like to have it in my power to serve the schooner the same trick!" he cried, in a deep, but passionate voice.

"Good!" cried Professor Quill, "remarkably good!"

"How many men," continued Capstan, addressing his mate, "should you say are in that foremost boat?"

Block, who was seated in the stern-sheets of the launch which was now dashing along within a few yards of the boat, replied, without hesitation:—

"Ten; not a soul more. I contracted 'em by the flash of their arms when they fired!"

"Your men in the launch have their cutlasses with 'em, have they not?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The professor, as though struck with a suspicion of what was passing through the captain's mind, eagerly turned round, his green spectacles flashing in the light of the boat-lantern. Some minutes elapsed before the skipper again spoke. He then ordered the launch alongside of the cutter. Block obeyed; and, motioning to Loring to follow him, the captain leaped into the boat. The second mate was soon by his side. The captain then informed Block that he intended to make a dash at the pirates' foremost boat.

"I'm of opinion that it'll be a useless ambassadorship," returned the first officer. "Two boats ag'in one—"

"No," interrupted Capstan, "the boat is so far ahead of the one astern that it won't get any assistance from its companion during the fight. I think I can wind up the combat before the rear boat comes up. Jump in here—four more men from the cutter!" he added, turning toward the crew of that vessel.

Up sprung the professor of languages, but before he could advance a step, four of his shipmates had leaped into the launch.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Quill, much disappointed, "this is really too bad! Don't you want another man, captain? You'll find me quite serviceable—you will, really."

"Them spectacles of your'n are too 'valleble' to get smashed," returned Capstan, "so you'd better stay where you are."

"I am to go with you, of course," said Block, as the skipper, motioned him toward the cutter. "Surely you don't intend to leave me behind?"

"Ay, ay, you must take charge of the other boat."

"I'd rather make one of your party," answered Block. "Why not let Loring stay with the cutter. It strikes me that this is another 'new-for-wrong!'"

"I can't take you," returned the captain, decidedly. "Your knowledge of womankind makes it necessary, of a sartinty, that you, of all others, shouldn't get hurt. Miss Greenville needs somebody that 'surmises' her, and you're the man, Block—ay, ay, you're the man."

"My knowledge of woman isn't to be imputed," said Block, bowing low to Grace; "and, of course, much as I'd like to commingle in the fray, I'm bound to be observant to the wishes of them that requires me."

So saying, he stepped into the cutter, and, whirling the head of the launch around, Capstan ordered his men to pull. Away went the boat with arrowy speed, and, in a few minutes, it was within a fathom of the one occupied by the astonished Malays.

"Now, then, lads!" gritted the skipper, through his teeth, "now, then, stand up!"

The stout fellows put their oars apeak, and drawing their cutlasses, obeyed.

A volley was fired from the small-arms of the pirates, and with inexpressible anguish, Capstan saw two of his men fall dead.

The next moment, the bows of the launch dashed full against the side of the other boat, and being lashed to it, a desperate fight ensued. Having sprung into the vessel occupied by their foes, the men of the Rainbow gave them no time to reload, but dealt their blows rapidly and with deadly effect.

Loring had cut down one of the dusky villains, and crossed swords with another, when a gigantic fellow, who wore a red skull-cap and was stripped to the waist, seized him by the nape of the neck, and raised his long knife to inflict a deadly stab. Capstan, however, saw the movement in time to run his cutlass through the giant's body before he could execute his purpose. The man tumbled into the water with a groan, which was echoed by his shipmates. He was evidently an officer, and his fall discouraged them. They retreated over the stern of their craft into the water, leaving the white men masters of their boat, though they (the pirates) still clung to the gunwales. At the same moment Capstan caught sight of the Malays' other vessel speeding rapidly toward him. He sprung into the cutter with the remnant of his crew,

now amounting to but six men—the rest having been slain ; and, cutting the lashings, ordered the men to pull ahead. They did so ; and as they receded from the boat in which they had fought, they saw only four of the villains crawl into it.”

“ Ay, ay,” said old Tom Rocket, “ we have l’arned them fellows a lesson that they won’t easily forget. There’s nothing like makin’ strong impressions on them that you meet.”

“ You are right enough there, Tom,” said Capstan ; “ we’ve given ’em a blow which will prevent ’em from chasing us much longer in boats.”

Peering through the gloom, as he spoke, he was just able to distinguish the dark outlines of the pursuing craft and its occupants.

“ They stick to us yet,” cried Tom Rocket, “ but it ain’t because they are anxious-like as to the state of our ‘ healths.’ Nothin’ would please ’em better than to run us up to the yard-arm, in which, hows’ever they’ll be mighty disapp’inted.”

“ Ay, that they will,” cried the skipper. “ But pull ahead, lads, pull ahead. We haven’t any time to lose ! ”

The brave fellows, assisted by the second mate, who worked the after oar, obeyed with such hearty good will, that they were soon alongside of the cutter. The captain, in a few brief words, gave his mate an account of the combat, after which the crews of both boats were equalized. Then Block took his proper place in the launch, while Loring and the skipper entered the cutter.

“ Pull ahead,” was the next order, and the two vessels flew through the waves.

“ Cheer up, Miss Greenville ! ” exclaimed Loring, as he looked astern ; “ our pursuers have vanished. They

have given up the chase and have returned to the schooner."

"I am glad of that," said she; "but it is dreadful to think that the lives of some of your men have been sacrificed. I would that we had escaped without—"

"That's always the way with the women, I believe," interrupted Capstan, smiling; "they are always for having everything settled without bloodshed—bless their pugnacious eyes!"

"You are corrective enough there, Captain Capstan," cried Block, from the launch, "and them women that's otherwise is an indigenous species of monster that isn't to be moderated. The three Mrs. Blocks was as gentle as lamhkins."

"Ay, ay, beggin' your pardon," cried Tom Rocket, "and sich frisky little creaturs as some of 'em are; some of the lasses I mean, that's to be seen ashore! Why, bless my old eyes, it's the wonderfulest thing in the world that I never got spliced!"

"You may feel congratulative that you never did," exclaimed Block, "for the partner of your woes might have been torn from your depreciative bosom, and extinguished as mine have been, leaving me to mourn for 'em, like the raven, as I've heard of, which always was a-saying 'Nevermore!'"

"Why, now—me! but that's too bad!" cried Capstan, considerably touched—"that's a melancholy 'doxology,' Block, and I feel for you!"

"Ay, ay, but we must try not to mourn for them that's gone," returned the mate. "We must try, instead, to consolidate them that's living. And so," he added, turning toward the young girl, "you will admit me to say, by y of smoothing your sorrows of them that's been slain,

that if the attack hadn't been consummated, we'd have all been captured and deteriorated into mince-meat!"

"My only regret," exclaimed the professor of languages, "is, that it was not in my power to make one of the fighting party. You missed me, I dare say, Captain Capstan?"

"Perhaps we'd have missed you all the same had you been there?" answered the skipper. "So it can make no great difference."

"Why, why, sir. Really now, you don't mean to cast an imputation upon my courage?"

"As you like," answered Capstan bluntly; "perhaps I do!"

"Oh, dear me!" cried the professor, "this is too bad! I am not very pugnacious I know, but to be called a coward before a young lady—"

"I don't think the captain meant that, professor!" good-naturedly interrupted Loring; "he probably meant to imply that you'd be the first man killed; therefore, the first one missed."

"And he'd have been killed," the skipper gruffly added, "because his l'arning wouldn't have left him any spunk—any backbone to help himself."

"Another 'new-for-wrong'" cried Block. "Ay, ay, there you go again, Captain Capstan. I hope you don't think that my l'arning has detrementalized from my persistent qualities."

From some cause or other the professor's spectacles now begun to rattle, while Capstan replied:—

"You've had your trial more than once, Block, so that there's no doubts about you; besides which, your l'arning is of that kind which relates to feminines."

"And the dictionary, Capstan—the dictionary, which

I've perambulated through and through, so that I'm perfectly acquainted with them words which are most voluble and insinuating."

Another rattle from the green spectacles;

Capstan remained silent.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHASE NOT YET GIVEN UP.

Soon afterwards, Grace, who had scarcely closed her eyes for two nights, dropped into a deep slumber, much to the satisfaction of Loring, who had prepared for her a snug resting-place near the stern-sheets. Seated upon a couple of chair-cushions in the bottom of the boat, with her head reposing on soft pillows spread over a thwart, she slept as soundly and as peacefully as a child in its cradle. The light of the boat's lantern, which was now placed in a position that would prevent the crew of the schooner from seeing it, fell upon her innocent face, as though it loved to repose there. It shed a golden tint upon the threads of her rich brown hair; softly defined the marble whiteness of her forehead, and the feathery shadows of her long, drooping eyelashes.

"Gently, lads, gently, with them oars," whispered Capstan to his crew. "Be careful of your strokes now; our little girl sleeps."

An order hardly necessary, for these rough men, at the moment the young girl closed her eyes, had stopped conversing, and had placed bits of cloth in their rowlocks, so as not to disturb her slumber. Owing to these precautions she did not wake until the shadows were beginning to fade from sea and sky. By this time the breeze had freshened, and the crew of each boat having rigged a

sail, were, with the exception of the officers, stretched across their thwarts, enjoying a brief season of repose. The sails being expansive, sent the boats gliding through the water at the rate of five or six knots. Both were steering upon a south-west course, which, at their present rate of sailing, would carry them—according to the skipper's calculations—within sight of land before noon that day.

"I hope you slept well, Miss Greenville," said the second mate, "though it must be owned that the accommodation was none of the best."

"I don't think I should have slept better," she answered, smiling, "in the best of beds. Do you think we will see a sail, before long?"

"We may possibly fall in with some whale-ship, as we are not far from one of the cruising grounds. But, at any rate, we shall see land before many hours."

"Oh! I am glad of that!"

An exclamation from Capstan, who stood with his glass pointed astern, drew towards him the earnest eyes of the young girl.

"Ay, ay," he continued, "there she is, the schooner, not much more than a league distant."

He passed the glass to Loring.

"It's a schooner, certainly," said the young man, after a moment's survey; "and there can be no doubt that it is the pirate. But to make sure, we might question Block."

The mate's boat was a few fathoms astern. Capstan hailed it; then slackened his sheet until it had come alongside.

Block took the proffered glass and levelled it towards the vessel.

"That's her!" he cried, the next moment, "that's the rascal in chase of us!"

Grace turned pale and trembled.

The slumberers in both boats were roused, and ordered to take to their oars; and though their arms ached with their previous exertions, yet they obeyed without a murmur. The sight of the lovely, uncomplaining girl, who had shown so much sympathy for them, and who depended upon them for protection, added to their strength.

Very soon, the morning light dissipated every shadow; the schooner could now be seen with the naked eye. Capstan swept the horizon in every direction, with his glass, in the hope of "sighting" some vessel which might be signalled and brought to his assistance, but in vain.

Meanwhile, the pursuing vessel, which had crowded canvas in the chase, gained upon the fugitives every moment; it was soon less than a league astern.

"Loring," whispered Capstan, "this is a bad business. It makes my heart bleed to think of that poor girl's falling into the hands of them bloodthirsty dogs. I see no hope of our escaping 'em!"

"Ay, ay," the second mate sadly replied, "our prospects look dark enough. Though we will all fight for Miss Greenville while we have power to wield a cutlass, yet we must be overpowered at last."

"That's so, lad; and it's awful to think of what will be her fate when she's captured. It's a hard, hard thought to bear, especially as I saw her father a few days before he died; and when he asked me if it would be safe for his daughter to sail in my craft, I told him for a sartainty that it would—that nothing would happen to her! It wasn't right of me to feel so sartain—no, no, it wasn't."

"Matters may not turn out so bad as we think they

will," said Loring, as he directed a steady glance to windward. "There is still room for hope."

Grace heard the concluding words, and her face brightened. .

"Thank God ! You really think there is hope for us ?"

"I do."

"What is it, lad ? What do you see ?" inquired the captain, noticing the steadiness of his gaze.

"A fog-bank," answered Loring, "and if this breeze holds long enough, the fog may spread around us in time to enable us to elude the schooner."

Capstan rubbed his hands.

"You are right, my lad," said he, "there is some chance of that. Unless I'm much mistaken, that fog will be upon us in the course of half an hour. If we can contrive to keep a reasonable distance from the craft during that time, I trust we shall be able to lead her on a wrong scent."

He turned briskly toward the mate and ordered him to rig out some more spare pieces of canvas, plenty of which was in both vessels.

"No matter how it's done, Block," he added, "so long as you catch the wind,"

The mate promptly obeyed, and the two boats were soon gliding along under clouds of additional canvas that certainly gave them an odd appearance.

"This is highly 'picturesque,' " remarked the professor, as he turned up his green spectacles to survey the sails. "Highly 'picturesque !' We look like miniature vessels of war. I must make a note of this in my journal !"

"Ay, ay !" cried Block, "it's quite a 'metamoramasis.' We wouldn't hardly know each other at a disrespectful distance."

"There's nothing warlike about it, how's ever, as the professor seems to think," remarked Tom Rocket, "seeing as we hain't got any 'teeth' to show."

"My dear young lady!" exclaimed Block, looking sternly with one eye at the old seaman, and trying to smile with the other at Grace, "don't let that remark of Tom's incommode you. By teeth, he means guns, which bears no sort of resemblance to them little ingenious ivories of your'n."

Just then a puff of smoke issued from the schooner's bow; a dull report followed, and a ten-pound shot, plunging into the water within a fathom of the cutter's stern, sent the spray flying over Loring's head.

"Hip! hip! hip! hooray! hooray!—this is really exciting!" exclaimed the professor of languages, springing to his feet, and waving his smoking-cap about his head.

"Down! down to your oar!" thundered Capstan; "what kind of boy's play is that?"

"Beg pardon," cried Quill, "but I couldn't help it; really—I—"

"We'll see how you'll act when it comes to the p'int!" interrupted the skipper sternly; "none of your boy's play then, or I'll run you through with my own hand."

"You may do so if I don't do my duty," answered Quill. "Oh! dear me!—yes, indeed!"

Another puff of smoke from the schooner; another shot. It passed through the head of one of the men in the launch. He fell from his thwart with a short, sharp cry.

Grace shuddered, and pressed her hands upon her eyes.

"Poor fellow!" cried the professor, with real feeling. "He died at the post of duty, and shall be praised, as he deserves to be, in my journal!"

"Overboard with him, men," said Block, "we have no time now for a funeral requiem."

Accordingly, the dead body was gently dropped into the sea.

"There goes one of our best men," said Loring, in a mournful voice. "He had a mother and sisters at home, too."

"Ah! it is dreadful!" faltered Grace, with tears in her eyes; "his poor mother! his poor mother!"

"Be consolidated, I beg of you," said Block. "The sufferings of the mother won't endure for a long time. She's old, and will soon join her son in the fields of martyrdom."

"Where we must all go to, sooner or later," put in Tom Rocket. "So dry your eyes, my dear lass, and keep that consolin' thought in your mind."

"Ay, ay; but blow me if I think it's a very consoling one, either, to a young lady in her teens," cried Capstan, "though it may do on a pinch."

"If I've said anything wrong," said Rocket, with an expression of deep concern upon his broad, honest face, "I beg the lady's pardon. I was a-thinking of the blessin's of Christianity when I spoke."

"This isn't a fit time for a moralizing biography," exclaimed Block, "with that schooner a-comin' up hand over fist. She isn't two-thirds of a league from us now."

"God help the girl if she falls into the hands of those demons!" muttered Capstan, with a shudder.

"Yonder comes the fog!" cried Loring, hopefully "The wind is freshening every moment. We'll soon be hidden by the mist."

"I don't know, lad, I don't know!" responded Capstan,

shaking his head. "I'm sartin it'll come just a minute too late."

Block, overhearing this speech, carefully scrutinized the fog-bank, the outer edge of which was now about a mile astern of the schooner, and he mentally acknowledged that the skipper was right. On reflecting a moment, a sudden idea occurred to him which he lost no time in expressing to his commander.

The reader will please bear in mind that the two boats and the schooner were heading directly before the wind. In order, therefore, to prevent the capture of both boats, the mate proposed that the cutter should be kept off on the starboard tack, and the launch on the opposite or larboard. The sails could be easily trimmed to enable the crews to accomplish this manœuvre, which Block had no doubt would result in the escape of the boat containing Grace Greenville. The schooner's foreyards being braced a little to larboard, he had good reason to believe that her captain would keep off for the launch, instead of taking the trouble to brace on the other tack for the sake of capturing the cutter. Before the launch could be taken, the skipper's boat would have been left far astern of the pirates' vessel, and have become shrouded in the fog.

"Ay, ay," replied Capstan, when Block had concluded, "it's the only alternative left us—the only one. As we can't save both boats, it's proper that we should sacrifice the launch to save the cutter, which has in it this precious freight of womankind that you, Block, understand so well. I'll consent to it on the condition that you take my place, while I take yours. Them as old as I am don't mind being cut out of the last few years of their lives; but you, Block—you are still young enough to splice with a fourth wife, and blow me if I desert you! Besides," he added,

mournfully, "My old heart is with the Rainbow, which I've sailed for so many years, and which has gone to the bottom of the sea, never more to return. So, come on, Block—come on, old chum, and take my place."

"If I do, may I be dissolved!" cried the mate. "No—no—I can never consent to your deposition. I've braved death many a time, Capstan, and I ain't afraid of him now, let him exterminate me in whatever capacious manner he chooses!"

The two boats were now so close that the starboard gunwale of the one, and the larboard of the other, almost touched. Capstan had placed his foot upon that of the cutter, intending to jump into the launch and push the mate into the stern sheets of the other boat, when Loring, with a sudden but gentle motion of his powerful arm, pushed the skipper aside. Then he sprang into the launch, and seizing the tiller with one hand dexterously pushed Block into the cutter. Before either the astonished mate or his superior could utter a word, the receding boat was full five fathoms distant, running along on the larboard tack, her crew having already set and trimmed her sails.

"Good-bye, Capstan! Good-bye, Block! Good-bye, Miss Greenville!" shouted the young officer, smiling and waving his disengaged hand.

"Avast there, Loring!" roared the mate, jumping up and down in an excited manner. "Come back here, come back at once, I command you, sir!"

But the second mate, who was now almost beyond hearing distance, only shook his head.

"Ay, ay, Block," said Capstan, "you see it's no use. He always was a sort of headstrong youngster. But, he's lost now—we'll have to let him go. He's acted against

orders—he has, decidedly, though it was done from good motives. Well, well, there's no help for it."

"I don't see as there is," answered Block, mournfully, "but I never knew before that it would be so hard to give up commingling with them that's gone to their diurnal rest! I had made up my mind to it, d'ye see, Capstan, and was ready and willing for death."

"And beggin' your pardon," cried Tom Rocket, "you may not be disappointed after all. There's no knowing what may come to pass."

With wild eyes and pale cheeks, Grace Greenville rose to her feet, and laid a trembling hand upon the captain's arm.

"You are not going to desert him!" she faltered.

"There is no other alternative," replied Capstan. "We must save you, my dear girl, at all hazards."

"No, no!" she cried, firmly. "I am not afraid to die. For God's sake don't let my presence interfere with any plan you might wish to adopt. Let no lives be sacrificed on my account. You must not desert your second mate! No—no—you must not desert him."

But Capstan shook his head; the sails were trimmed, and the boat glided off upon the starboard tack, rapidly increasing the distance between it and the launch.

"I must disobey you, my child," said the old skipper, sadly. "You can form no idea of what would be your fate should those barbarians get you in their clutches. If you were not with us, there would be more lives sacrificed than there will be now, for then we should all—all of us rough fellows—stick together, and fight it out until every one of us was cut to pieces."

"Ah! my God! and he—Mr. Loring, together with the three men with him, must then be killed and slaughtered

without mercy ! Tell me—oh, tell me, that there is some hope of their escape !”

“Leave her to me,” whispered Block, just as Capstan was about framing a reply, “leave her to me, old chum. You are not the man for them kind. That cutting to pieces of yourn was an invincible blunder, and should never be used in the ears of females, as it has to them a most distressing intimation.”

So saying, the mate turned to Grace with a low bow.

“Miss Greenville,” said he, hoping to win her confidence and respect by a single skilful stroke, “I have buried three wives !”

She looked up at him with no little astonishment.

“Ay, ay, Miss, and,” he added, glancing triumphantly toward the captain, “one of them wives was the very inflection of your fair self, by which you can understand that my apprehension of your nature is complete. Sich being the statement of affairs, I consider it my duty to console you as speedily as possible, which may be done by the informal notice to you that your presence here, instead of causing an excessive diffusion of blood, ameliorates from the same in a manner at once merciful and angelic.”

Grace looked puzzled ; Capstan nodded admiringly ; the green spectacles of Professor Quill rattled violently.

“It’s done,” whispered Block, in Capstan’s ear ; “it’s done ; just look at her !”

She was sitting with clasped hands, pale cheeks, and tear-dimmed eyes, gazing after the receding boat.

The skipper grasped the mate’s hand.

“You are a treasure, Block !”

“Not a sob, not a word of grief from her, you perceive.”

"Ay, ay, Block, it was a masterly stroke, and God will bless you for it!"

Bang! from the schooner, and the spiteful whiz of another shot was heard as it passed over the cutter.

"Hooray! hooray! hooray!" screamed the professor of languages, "this is exciting!"

"Silence!" roared Capstan. "Don't let me hear you again!"

"Oh, dear me, certainly not!"

"There she goes in chase of the launch!" cried Block. "God help our brave lads!"

The cutter was soon more than a league distant off the schooner's quarter, and only one of the topsails of the launch was now visible to the naked eye, apparently about a mile ahead of the pursuing vessel. Suddenly, the report of a gun was again heard, and the little speck of canvas immediately disappeared. The captain looked through his glass, but he saw no vestige of the boat. An expression of pain passed over his face; he whispered to his mate, and the latter breathed a heavy sigh. The schooner continued running along on the same course for ten minutes longer, when she braced her yards to starboard, and came round in chase of the cutter. By this time, however, the boat was partially shrouded by the fog; a few moments later, this became so dense that Capstan felt satisfied that he was screened from the view of his pursuers. He trimmed his sails anew; then veering, came up to the wind on the starboard tack, and stood away, with the water breaking over both gunwales. He continued upon this course until a sufficient time had elapsed for the schooner to pass to leeward of him, when he again put the cutter before the wind.

"I think we are in a fair way to give that rascal the

slip now," said he; "I should feel cheerful, almost happy, Block, if it were not for the sad fate of Loring and his crew. I am pretty sartin that the boat was stove by that last shot."

"Ay, ay, and we may feel sartin that the schooner didn't pick up our poor fellows that were left struggling in the water. There was only two of 'em that could swim, Loring and Tom Pool, the bow oarsman."

Grace started and sprung to her feet.

"Who knows?" she exclaimed, eagerly. "Perhaps these two men are even now clinging to oars, or to a piece of the shattered boat. I implore you, Captain Capstan, to steer your boat, so that, if such is the case, they may be picked up."

"It would be a hard matter, my dear girl," Capstan answered sadly, "to find the particular spot where the craft was stove. But Providence may reward our s'arch."

"And if it does," cried the professor of languages, "there will be another important item for my journal! Dear me! he was a good scholar, and I hope we may find him."

The captain arranged his sails so that he might keep off a point or two, and the cutter gathered headway upon her new course.

The search was continued for a couple of hours, but without success. Just as Capstan gave it up, the professor stated that he heard a faint cry off the weather-bow; but, as a large bird went rushing past the boat the next moment, Capstan concluded that Quill's eagerness to obtain items had so excited his imagination as to cause him to mistake the screaming of this creature for a human voice.

So the cutter was again put before the wind ; and the men, leaning from their thwarts, spoke in low, sad voices of the fate of their shipmates. Little did they imagine that, at this very moment, the second mate was not much more than a quarter of a mile from their boat, clinging to one of the mast-poles of the launch.

CHAPTER V.

ADRIFT AND IN BONDS.

THE fate of the launch had been sealed by that last shot from the schooner. It struck the little craft on the bow, opening it and cutting away one of the small spars to which a sail was attached. The boat filled and sunk, leaving the men struggling in the water. Loring and Tom Pool, the only swimmers there, contrived to drag their two shipmates to the spar, to which they clung with a tenacious grasp. Soon, however, the schooner was seen bearing down upon them. Her rigging, her sails, and her bows, were alive with her dusky crew, who yelled and shouted with demoniacal triumph. Some of them were armed with muskets, some with pistols, and a few carried boarding-pikes.

"They are going to fire upon us first, and run us down afterward !" cried Tom Pool.

He was right ; they did so.

Loring's three shipmates were killed ; he was the only one of that unfortunate crew who rose to the surface after the vessel had run over them. He had saved himself by diving far down in the watery depths. He afterwards came up far astern of the schooner, and thus escaped observation. Very soon, the vessel dashed off in chase of the cutter, until, finally, she was screened from

Loring's view by the fog. He then swam to a spar and lashed himself to it by means of a rope that had been used as a sheet for one of the sails. At the moment when Capstan gave up the search, he had remained thus for two hours. The cutter had passed several times within a hundred and fifty yards of him, and yet he had known nothing of its vicinity, though, had the crew shouted, he might easily have heard them. His situation was sad enough. Alone upon the wide ocean, supported by a solitary spar, exhausted by his late exertions, feeling both hungry and thirsty, despairing of being picked up, he could only anticipate suffering and death. A presentiment that the cutter had escaped, that Grace Greenville was safe, cheered him, however, in the midst of his despair. He derived much pleasure, even now, from thinking of her. She had exerted a pleasing influence upon his spirit. While he lived, he could not forget the music of her voice, the light of her soft brown eyes.

The day wore on; the shadows of night gathered around him. He shouted long and loud, in the faint hope that some vessel might now be near. But he heard only the noise of the waves as they dashed together, and the screaming of the sea-bird as it whirled in circles over his head. He was so exhausted that he found it difficult to keep his eyes open. Once he fell into a doze, and had begun to dream that he was again on board of the Rainbow, when he was awakened by the splashing of a wave into his face. He rubbed his eyes, feeling a little confused; but the reality of his situation soon broke upon his mind. Still fast to the spar—still drifting along with the everlasting currents of the ocean.

He did not allow his eyes to close again.

A few hours after midnight, the fog having by this

time cleared, he saw the full moon emerge from a cloud in the west. A long, broad stream of light now lay like a silver pathway athwart the surface of the ocean. Shooting across it, far in the distance, a dark outline greeted for an instant the vigilant eyes of the young sailor. He leaned eagerly forward, but the vision had vanished. Soon after, he saw it again; it was nearer, more distinct than before; it was approaching. At length it glided into the floating pathway of silver, and he uttered a cry of joy. He could distinguish the flashing of paddles, the outlines of human heads; he could hear voices chanting a strange, wild chorus. Three times he shouted with all his strength, but there came no response. He unfastened the rope by which he was tied, and straddling the spar, shouted again. He was heard this time, for a yell, a savage yell, that made him shudder, broke upon his ears. The paddles flew faster through the water; he was soon able to make out a long canoe filled with half-naked figures; later he could distinguish their faces, disfigured by hideous marks of yellow and blue colours, and crowned by great fiery masses of hair. He knew, by these signs, that the men were savages, belonging to some one of the Pacific Islands. They were soon near enough to seize him, and they dragged him into the canoe. They stopped paddling, and, crowding up to him, peered into his face, all talking together in a tongue unknown to him. Calmly returning the glances of their wild, fierce eyes, he strove to answer, by signs, the questions which he imagined they asked. They paid no attention to his motions, however, but continued to screech and jabber, apparently getting more angry with him every moment, because he was unable to reply to them. Their eyes flashed upon him like coals of fire; one of them

shook a great war-club in his face; another pointed a spear at his heart. He thought it best to show an undaunted front, so he looked at them steadily, and though his heart beat fast, yet there was no expression of fear in his bronzed face. The savages were evidently on their return from some warlike expedition. Their breasts and arms were covered with contusions and scars; there was a seriously wounded native lying near the bow of the canoe; there were many broken spears and war-clubs in the vessel. Loring coolly pointed to the prostrate islander—to the damaged weapons—to the scarred bosoms around him—and glanced inquiringly into the face of the man nearest him. This person, he believed, was a chief, for the others listened deferentially when he spoke. He nodded with a sort of wild dignity upon encountering the young sailor's expressive glance, and, as though pleased with his cool behaviour, burst into a laugh. Then pushing aside the threatening spear and the uplifted club, he said something to his dusky crew, who immediately sat down and commenced plying their paddles. The chief took his station near the stern, and, folding his arms over his broad bosom, kept his eyes fixed upon the second mate. More than once the latter saw the native's face betray a peculiar expression; he would have given worlds to know what was passing through that untutored mind. Glancing round him, he could not help admiring the swiftness and regularity with which the paddles were moved. The arms of the savages being long and flexible, were peculiarly fitted for this work, while their muscular but supple frames betokened their great capacity for endurance. The only garment worn by each was a piece of tappa (cloth)—probably bought from the captain of some trading vessel—which, being secured

about the waist, hung a little below the knee. Their skin, of a dark olive tint, fairly shone with cocoa-nut oil, and their hair, which was coloured red, was arranged so as to look like great bunches of oakum. The length of the canoe was not less than forty feet; the number of its occupants thirty. Very soon they all broke forth into a wild chorus, similar to that which Loring had previously heard. Their voices were loud and clear, not altogether unmusical, and the second mate felt a throb of wild pleasure as he listened.

"If Professor Quill were only here," thought he, "what an item for his journal."

Day was now beginning to break, and land was visible ahead of the canoe. Soon the young sailor was able to distinguish the cocoa-nut trees upon the beach, and also a number of females standing near the water's edge. The chief rose and uttered a scream, so loud and shrill that it penetrated Loring's brain like a knife. The noise of the chorus was as different from this cry as is the clanging of cymbals from the wildest shriek of a Scottish bagpipe. In response, the women begun to dance about the beach, laughing, screaming, and clapping their hands. The canoe struck the sand soon after, and the natives sprung out, motioning to the young sailor to follow. He obeyed, and the next moment was completely hemmed in by the females, as they rushed from all sides to embrace the dusky warriors. The simultaneous cackling of twenty flocks of geese could scarcely have been heard in the din which followed. The young women screeched, laughed, and clapped their hands; the men, swinging their clubs around their heads, yelled like demons, while, strangely mingling with these joyful demonstrations, there rose, now and then, a howl of unearthly lamentation from an

old withered crone, who knelt by the prostrate form of the wounded native. He was probably her son : his bleeding head was upon her knee ; her long grey hair fell about his face.

Presently, the chief lifted his arm with a dignified motion, and said something to his warriors, upon which three of them lifted the sufferer and bore him off, followed by the old woman, still howling and moaning in a distracted manner. By this time, the tumult having in a measure subsided, Loring encountered the curious glances of the females. They gathered in front of him, peering into his face with their great black eyes, and now and then exchanging a word in a low voice. Some of them were quite pretty. Their faces were not painted, their features were good, their skin of an olive tint. Their hair, not being coloured, hung below their waists in black shining masses. They wore strings of beads around their necks, and green wreaths about their foreheads. In addition to the cloth secured about the waist, each was decorated with a pretty piece of red silk, worn gracefully upon the shoulders. As the silk was quite new, Loring concluded that some trading vessel from Japan had recently visited the island. An old man, who had lately joined the group, seemed to guess his thoughts by the expression of his eyes. He tapped him upon the shoulder and addressed him in broken English :—

“You, look-ee ! much fine cloth. Ship come here t'ree week ago. Sell plenty silk for cocoa-nut and banana.”

“I am both surprised and glad, my friend,” exclaimed the captive, “to hear you speak my language. I feared that I should not be able to make myself understood by—”

"Oh, yes!" interrupted the old man, "me can talk white man tongue. White man long ago carry me away in ship. That's way learn speak English. White man beat, strike, kick much!" he added, with flashing eyes. "No like 'em for dat. Kill 'em all; best way to do."

Before the second mate could reply, the chief said something to the old man, who, bowing his head deferentially, turned again to the sailor.

"Onolo, de chief, say like to know how you come float on pole in de water."

Loring told his story in a few words, and the interpreter, in his turn, related it to Onolo, who then conducted the young man to a large hut, situated near a grove of coaco-nut trees and overlooking the sea. It evidently was the home of the chief, for, upon his entrance, an old woman flew to a corner and brought forth a curiously-formed wooden dish containing roasted fish, bread-fruit, bananas, and cocoa-nut sauce. He seated himself upon a mat, and she put the dish before him. Then he motioned to Loring to sit down and partake of the food, and to the interpreter, who was the only native that had followed them into the hut, to place himself on his left. Loring was not slow in accepting Onolo's invitation. Between him and the chief the dish was soon emptied; and, after Guy had refreshed himself with a few deep draughts of water, contained in an odd-looking vessel shaped like a gong, he looked about him for some comfortable spot on which to stretch himself for a nap. Observing a heap of cocoa-nut mats in one corner, he rose, and was moving towards them, when the chief, with a loud screech of displeasure, motioned to him to sit down again. He did so, at the same time requesting the interpreter to inform Onolo that he felt

very tired and sleepy. This, however, the old man refused to do.

"You get sleep, plenty, pretty soon. Sleep so you no wake more," he said, with a hoarse laugh.

"Surely you don't mean that Onolo, after treating me in this kind manner, intends to have me killed?"

"T'ink so. Hope so. Give plenty eat and drink to make fat. Know what me mean now?"

The young man shuddered, but encountering at this moment the scrutinizing gaze of the chief, he even forced a smile.

"Do you know, my friend," said he, addressing the old man "that to kill, roast, and eat a poor sailor is a most uncivilized way of—"

"Ah! me know what dat mean!" interrupted the native. "Dat mean savage. Well, me savage Mono, when white man take me 'way. White man—civilize, you call him—make me more savage. Kick, strike, knock poor Mono on de head. Me call dat more savage as islander."

Before Loring could reply, Onolo addressed a few words to the interpreter, who then rose and left the hut. He returned in a quarter of an hour, accompanied by three hideous-looking savages, whom the sailor was certain he had not seen before. Two were of gigantic stature, the other was short, with a tremendous breadth of chest and enormous head. They were armed with the war-club, each of which was so large and heavy, that the task of wielding it with effect might have been thought impossible by the young man but for the ease with which it was carried.

Onolo screeched forth a welcome, and the three visitors, scowling darkly at Guy, seated themselves on the

right of the chief. The old woman, who for some time had remained in a distant corner, staring curiously at the sailor, now moved to one side of the rude habitation and brought forth four well-filled pipes, with large wooden bowls and reed stems of enormous length. In the bowl of each she put a burning coal procured from the smouldering embers of a fire near the door of the hut; then, with a reverential bend of her head, presented the smoking treasures to Onolo and his three guests, who received them with a simultaneous grunt of satisfaction. They were soon puffing away and conversing together in low, earnest tones. By the frequent glances directed towards him, Loring knew that he was the subject of consultation. The short savage looked particularly vindictive, nor was the expression upon the face of the other two guests of a nature to reassure him.

"What are they saying?" he ventured at length to inquire of the interpreter. "Nothing very flattering to me, I should judge."

"S-s-sh!" muttered the old man, in a low voice. "Dey all great chiefs. Must no speak when dey speak!"

The consultation lasted until the pipes were smoked out. Then Onolo said something to the short savage, who thereupon sprung to his feet, threw himself upon Loring, and, before the latter could make any resistance, hurled him upon his back. His huge muscular knee was upon the breast of the prostrate man in a moment, and his war-club lifted as though to deal a fatal blow. Guy could not move, for another savage had seized his arms, a third had grasped his ankles. He was utterly powerless. The knee upon his breast felt like some great iron weight; the grasp upon his arms and ankles was like that of a vice. He

saw the head of the ponderous club quivering above him ; he believed that in a moment it would descend, with crushing force, upon his skull.

Why did not the savage strike at once ? What pleasure could he derive from torturing him in this manner ? The cruel, exultant expression of the native's face inspired him with horror and indignation. His eyes flashed glances of defiance into those of his tormentor. Onolo—who, all this time, had been closely scrutinizing his countenance—suddenly uttered a grunt and a laugh of satisfaction. Then he spoke a few words, and Guy was released. He sprung to his feet, and, enraged beyond all bounds, would, the next moment, without thinking of consequences, have thrown himself upon the short savage, had not the interpreter and the chief grasped him by the shoulders.

"You very brave !" cried the old man. "Chief do dis for see whether you so. S'pose you said, ' No kill ! no kill ! ' he kill quick. But you no dis, and so he say he keep you for one warrior for him. He say you make good warrior ; so he no let 'nudder white man come and take you. Go sleep now, s'pose, you like."

The three guests having by this departed, Loring made his way to the mats, and, throwing himself upon them, dropped at once into a sound slumber.

CHAPTER VI.

LAND, HO ! AND SOMETHING MORE.

THE cutter had been kept steadily upon her course for four hours, when Block uttered an exclamation, and pointed directly ahead.

"Ay, ay," cried Capstan, "there it is—the land. Cheer

up my dear girl," he added, turning to Grace, "we'll soon be ashore. Don't you see that headland looming up through the fog?"

She did see it, and tried to smile, though her heart beat heavily. She missed the cheery voice and manly form of Loring; she believed that he had perished—that he had sacrificed his life for her sake. The cloud upon her spirit, she thought, would never pass away.

Soon the boat's keel grated upon a sandy beach, and the men sprung ashore. Block, with great gallantry, helped the young girl out of the cutter.

"Your troubles have imperceptibly diminished," said he. "We are now on dry land, and it's probable that we'll inscribe a sail before long."

"Ay, ay!" cried Capstan, "this headland rising above us, is just the place for a good lookout. Cheer up, my dear girl!"

"Dear me, how delicious!" exclaimed the professor of languages. "Here we are on a lonely island! This is an adventure, indeed."

"Pull up your cutter, lads," continued the skipper, "and get it behind these two rocks alongside of us as soon as you can. It is best," he added in a whisper, to his mate, "to have it out of sight. I shouldn't wonder if we saw that infarnal schooner when the fog clears."

"Very likely," answered Block; "and for that same reason, we must direct our huts where they can't be seen. While the men are getting out the contentments of the cutter, I'll just go and reconsider the island, to find a good spot for us."

The captain consenting, Block set out upon his expedition. Passing the headland, he made his way through a small grove of cocoa-nut trees, and came suddenly upon a

little valley watered by a clear stream. A better place, he thought, for the building of huts, could not have been found; so he returned and reported his success to the captain. Two of the men were sent to the valley to commence the work of erecting shelters. The rest soon followed, carrying boat-sails, mast-poles, kegs, packages of provisions, and many other articles taken from the cutter. Before night, the huts, two in number, and built of the branches of bread-fruit and cocoa-nut trees, were completed. One was very small, and situated about fifteen yards from the other, which was of larger dimensions. The first was designed for Grace—the last, for the occupation of the four men and two officers. Upon entering her “palace,” the young girl was much pleased with the manner in which it was fitted up. That she might have a soft couch, the men had first covered the inclosed space of ground with a thick carpet of leaves plucked from one of the bread-fruit trees that skirted the edges of the valley, and afterward spread over this a couple of thick blankets. In one corner of the apartment lay the chair-cushions upon which she had reposed while in the cutter, and not far from these stood a breaker (a small cask), containing fresh water procured from the stream. Fastened to the vessel, by means of a piece of rope-yarn, was a tin cup, which had been scoured and polished until it shone like silver. This was the property of old Tom Rocket, who could never have forgiven himself had he left upon it a single spot of rust to soil the lips of such a “nice little lass” as Grace Greenville. Besides the conveniences already mentioned, the young girl was surprised to see a small looking-glass, together with a piece of candle and some matches, lying upon an empty box. These articles had been provided by Block.

"A looking-glass," he had said to Capstan, "is one of the most inexcusable necessities of woman. For that reason, do you see, I've put one in her hut, and have besides thrown in the contingencies for striking a light, in order that she may see her inflection in the mirror."

While Grace was still occupied in surveying her apartment, she heard the voice of the mate outside of the canvas screen which had been fitted over the entrance of the hut.

"Will you be so good, my dear lass, as to participate with the rude-fare that I've provided? A little mastication of this combustible material will do you good!"

So saying, he pushed into the apartment a small pan, containing some roasted salt beef, a few pieces of cocoa-nut, and four sea-biscuits. A tin cup, filled with smoking hot coffee, was next introduced, and the mate then withdrew. By this time the shadows of night had begun to mingle with the fog, and the sailors were gathered near a small fire, eating their supper and talking over their late adventures. Capstan was fast asleep in the large hut, having finished his meal before his crew begun theirs. He had left orders with Block to station a guard of two men near the huts, to give warning in case of the appearance of savages, and the mate had chosen Professor Quill and Tom Rocket to stand the first watch. Accordingly, after their shipmates had retired, the two lookouts took their places upon a small hillock, just beyond the lower edge of the valley. At the expiration of two hours they were relieved, but, at four o'clock A.M., it was again their turn to watch. The day was beginning to break when the distant noise of a chorus of wild voices was borne to their ears. The fog having by this time cleared, they ran to the headland and looked around them. There

was soon light enough to enable them to make a discovery which the darkness had hitherto prevented. Looming up on their right, they saw a large island, green with groves of cocoa-nut and bread-fruit trees, and miniature forests of banana plants. Ridges of high land rose above the tops of the trees, crowned with luxuriant verdure and partially veiled by their clouds of floating mist. Far below lay the long, winding beach, curving round a number of little bays, and covered with sand as white as the foam by which it was washed. On one side, the beach sloped down to a small strait, about a quarter of a mile in width, and which separated the small island occupied by the party from the larger one upon which the two men now gazed. This, compared with its neighbour, was a perfect paradise.

"My eyes! who would have thought!" exclaimed Tom Rocket; "and," he added, clutching the arm of his companion, "do you see that?"

He pointed to a distant promontory, and glancing quickly toward it, the professor caught a glimpse of a long canoe, as it was disappearing round the point.

"It was full of savages!" cried the old seaman. "I saw 'em and their paddles. It was them that we heard a-chanting the chorus!"

Little did either of the two men imagine that the second mate was in that canoe!

They were on the point of turning for the purpose of making their way to the hut, when the keen eye of the old seaman suddenly became riveted upon an object—a mere speck dotting the sea—far away to the eastward. With a suspicious shake of the head, he pointed it out to the professor.

"It's a sail!" he exclaimed, "and in my mind it's not a friendly one."

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Professor Quill. "You don't say so? You don't mean to—"

"I can only guess," interrupted Rocket; "but, as is very nat'ral to suppose, I think it's the schooner."

"Why, bless me! I hope not!"

They ran to the hut, and, rousing Capstan and Block, informed them of what they had seen and heard. The captain seized his spy-glass, and made his way to the headland. The sail was too far off, however, to be seen very distinctly, even with the aid of the instrument.

"I can't make her out," he said to Block, who was watching him earnestly; "but, whatever she is, it is sartin she is a-coming this way."

He shut up his glass, and waited a full half-hour before taking another survey. The sail was much nearer than before: he had not surveyed it a minute when he lowered the glass.

"It's her, Block, for sartin!—it's the schooner?"

"I thought so. Do you think they have any suspense of our being here?"

"I don't doubt it. We must all keep out of sight. Here," he added, pointing to a small mound of earth close by, "is a sort of breast-work, which will hide me from the rascals. While I stay here and watch their manœuvres, you, Block, had better go back to the huts, and caution the men to keep out of sight. If they stay where they are, they can't be seen. Don't let 'em stir from the spot."

"Ay, ay," replied the mate, and departed.

Capstan had remained in his position for several hours, watching the schooner, which was approaching at the rate of eight knots, and was now little more than a league distant, when he felt a hand upon his arm.

He turned, expecting to see Block, but was much astonished upon beholding, instead, the face of an old savage, hideously painted, and lighted by a pair of fierce, sunken eyes. He sprung to his feet, expecting to be attacked, but the native smiled grimly, and, stepping back a couple of paces, folded his arms over his wrinkled bosom.

"You t'ink me kill? Not so—no come to kill—no got war-club—no got spear. Me you feleng (friend)."

"Where did you come from? who are you?"

"Name Mono. Me come from dat oder island, where me stan' on hill and see huts. See you, too. So come here in canoe. What vessel dat yonder?" he added, before Capstan could speak. "Seem to be comin' dis way."

In his surprise at the sudden appearance of the native, the skipper had forgotten his caution, and, having, as we have said, sprung to his feet, he had remained standing, so that the upper part of his body was fully exposed to the lookouts aboard the schooner. The last words of the savage now recalled him, as it were, to himself, and, as quick as a flash, he again crouched down behind the breastwork.

A peculiar expression beamed from Mono's hollow eyes.

"Seem much 'fraid of dat vessel. Got bad crew, s'pose?"

"Ay, ay, bad enough," answered the skipper, "and—and—there she goes, sure enough, up into the wind, with her topsail aback; and there goes a boat into the water!"

"Dem Malay!" cried the interpreter, as he watched the forms of the sailors descending into the boat. "Me

know by dem dress, by dem yell. Dey bad fellows. Quick cut t'roat, s'pose get hold of you. And dere dey come dis way," he continued, seeing the bow of the boat pointed directly for the headland.

Capstan did not reply : a few rapid bounds carried him to the valley. He was followed by Mono, upon seeing whom, the men, grasping their cutlasses, sprung to their feet. That he was the foremost of some party of savages in pursuit of their captain, was their first thought.

The skipper undeceived them in a moment.

"Quick, my lads !" he exclaimed, "pick up whatever articles you can lay your hands on at once, and follow me. The schooner's boat is coming ; we must take to the cutter again. If we stay here, we shall be discovered and attacked in the course of half an hour."

"Malay got plenty men—plenty oar !" cried Mono. "S'pose you go in boat, you be catch, quick. Me, your feleng ; got big canoe on oder beach. Go get him, paddle him here. Take you in, hide you in big island, where Malay no find you. Malay no see de canoe when go cross water : land hide him."

And without pausing to see whether or not the captain consented, the native darted off, and disappeared.

"What do you say, Block ? Shall we accept that fellow's offer ? He seems friendly."

"It seems to be our only alterative, Captain Capstan."

"Well, then, the matter is decided."

Ten minutes after, the little party were gathered upon the beach that bordered the strait, ready to embark in the canoe, which the savage was now paddling toward them.

Grace turned pale when the man was near enough

to enable her to distinguish his hideous features, and Block immediately set about the task of calming her fears.

"His looks are distressing, Miss Greenville," said he; "but appearances are sometimes very deceptive, you know. I think you'll find it so in the present case. He knows it's to his own advantage to be friendly, seeing as he and his brethren drive a shrewd, intermingling traffic with marchant vessels!"

"Oh, dear me!" cried Professor Quill, "he is quite a character, and will make quite a figure in my journal!"

Soon after, the canoe struck the beach, and the whole party took their places. There were a dozen paddles in the vessel, and four of them were soon doing good service in the hands of the seamen. The canoe flew swiftly over the waters of the strait, which, as Mono had said, was screened from the approaching boat of the Malays by the peculiar formation of the shores. In a short time the party were safely landed, and, motioning them to follow, the native commenced to thread a narrow, winding path leading between thick clumps of shrubbery, among which the banana plant, loaded with its "yellow treasures," frequently pleased the eye. The men plucked and ate the fruit as they pursued their way, and they were almost sorry when they entered a thick grove of bread-fruit trees, where the earth, though beautiful in a moist carpet of long waving grass and curious flowers, was yet devoid of the profitable plant which had afforded them so much enjoyment.

Leading them on a quarter of an hour longer, the native suddenly paused in front of a high rock, situated in a forest of coaco-nut trees, and half-hidden by clambering vines and thick masses of shrubbery. Pushing aside

the interlacing branches and leaves of a couple of young, curiously-shaped trees, he now disclosed the entrance to a large cave. The interior space of ground was thickly strewn with leaves, and in one corner there were a few mats.

"Dere," said Mono, with a smile, "go in dere all my 'felengs,' and Malay no come to trouble. Plenty warrior—plenty spear and club on dis island. S'pose come? drive 'way quick. Glad to go back to schooner!"

"Really," said the professor of languages, as the party moved into the cave, "this is quite romantic!"

"It is sartainly encouraging to find ourselves in this comfortable diploma!" cried Block, rubbing his hands, "these islanders know what's good for 'em."

"I hope," said Capstan, "that our friend won't forget us."

"Oh, no—me no forget. Before many hour, come again, and bring plenty to eat—banana, cocoa-nut, and fish. You all right—no fear."

After he had gone, Capstan drew forth his spy-glass, and placed it under his arm.

"I am going, Block," he whispered, "to the top of the rock, to get another look at the schooner. If anything happens you can call me. Keep your eye on the men, and don't let 'em stir from this spot."

"Ay, ay, sir, my secretion may be relied upon," responded the mate, with a bow.

The skipper left the cave, and was soon on the summit of the rock, crouching behind a heap of dry brushwood. From this position he could see the schooner, lying with her topsail aback and her jibs hauled down. Her rigging and yards were alive with men looking toward the smaller island. Upon the latter, Capstan saw, quite dis-

tinantly, the figures of her boat's crew moving hither and thither: occasionally, too, he heard a yell of demoniac disappointment.

"Ay, ay," he muttered, "you may s'arch and s'arch until doomsday, but you'll find nothing there!"

Half an hour afterward the Malays, having examined every part of the island, were gathered upon the summit of the headland. Capstan concluded that they were holding a consultation.

"They don't like to give us up," he said, mentally. "The trick that I sarved one of their boat's crews has worked 'em up to a high pitch, and made 'em eager for revenge. They haven't done looking for us yet."

A moment later, he saw them returning to the schooner in their boat.

"Can it be possible that they have given us up," he muttered. "I can hardly believe it, and yet it would seem so, by the way that boat is steering."

Suddenly he pointed his glass in another direction. A canoe shooting out from behind one of the promontories of the larger island, and containing a single individual, was naturally calculated to attract his attention. The vessel was heading directly for the schooner, which its occupant seemed in a great hurry to reach. A sudden suspicion flashed across the mind of the skipper.

Who was the native in the canoe?

The glass was not powerful enough to enable Capstan to distinguish his features, but his bowed figure was certainly not unlike that of Mono, the interpreter.

What business had he with the schooner? Perhaps he only wished to bargain with its crew for tobacco and cloth. It was quite customary for the Pacific Islanders to do this; to exchange the products of their fruitful soil

"Hookee—pooki—hee-hee!" he exclaimed, turning up the whites of his eyes.

"I don't understand you, my dear sir," replied the professor, "but if you mean that you want my glasses, I can assure you that you won't get them without a struggle. Oh, dear me—no!"

The native grasped the speaker's hand, and nodding his head toward his brother warriors, gently drew him from the cave. The professor offered no resistance, but, turning toward Grace, he remarked that he believed his spectacles would do her a good service, and advised her to keep up her spirits.

"What the deuce do you mean?" inquired the skipper.

"Simply that, by means of my glasses, I may be able to engage the attention of the natives, thus affording you all a chance to escape."

The skipper looked amazed, and, guessing his thoughts, Block nodded to him significantly.

"You'll never commit such a 'new-for-wrong' again, Captain Capstain," he exclaimed, "as that of accusing us men of l'arnin' of a want of courage. Them green spectacles will eventually remunerate us all."

Quill had now reached the line of savages. Grunting and screeching, these wild men gathered round him, closely scrutinizing the glasses, and tapping them with their fingers. But, when the professor pulled them from his eyes, the astonishment of the natives knew no bounds. All started back with cries of superstitious horror, except one, who had learned a few words of English from the interpreter. He stealthily advanced, and touched the eyelids of the professor with one of his thumbs, in a hesitating manner.

"Funny eye," he muttered, "one—two: take off

one eyes, oder eyes still dere. Dat queer ; neher see before !”

“ Why, it's the simplest thing in the world, my dear friend,” replied Quill. “ I was born that way. With my double eyes, I can see objects a hundred miles off ! Oh ! dear me—yes !”

So saying, he sat down, put the glasses upon the ground, and quietly folded his arms.

“ Mudder hab two eyes dat same way ?—and fader ?” inquired the native, as he closely scrutinized, without daring to touch them. “ Say—speak-ee me—was dat how come wid double eye ?”

“ Certainly, my dear sir—certainly.”

“ S'pose dese eyes you takee off break—what den ?”

“ They would snap a nerve and kill me at once—they would, really !”

The native's whole countenance was now twisted into such a ludicrous expression of wonder, that Quill could scarcely refrain from laughing. The wild youth communicated the startling “ truths” he had learned to his brother warriors, who then advanced, and, stooping upon their hands and knees, began to scrutinize the wonderful glass eyes lying upon the ground. This was exactly what the professor desired : there was now an opportunity for the occupants of the cave to escape. Nor were they slow to take advantage of it. They cautiously glided from the cave, their feet making no noise upon the soft damp earth, and struck into a path bordered by thick clumps of shrubbery. The noise made by the brushing of their garments against the leaves and branches was unheard by the natives amid the tumult of their excited voices ; and the party were soon many hundreds of yards from the rock.

"It is too bad," remarked Block, "to leave the professor in the hands of them delectable savages. Who knows what will become of him?"

"He will contrive to escape, easily enough, I dare say," replied Capstan. "At any rate, while he's in possession of them glasses, he won't come to harm."

Grace looked up anxiously.

"I am afraid," said she, "that Mono has seen spectacles before now. You remember that he told us while we were in the canoe, that he had sailed in some ship, and had visited many foreign countries. Now, when he comes to hear of the miraculous story of the glasses, will he not punish our friend for imposing upon his brother warriors?"

"Ay, ay, I didn't think of that," said Capstan. "I remember now that Quill's glasses didn't seem to surprise the savage you speak of when he was with us. However, the professor is shrewd, and I doubt not will contrive to escape before Mono is encountered. I was sorry to leave him, but we had no other alternative. Hark, here they come!" he added, as a succession of yells, followed by the loud rustling of the shrubbery behind them, saluted the ears of the party. "This way, men—this way!"

So saying, he plunged among the bushes that skirted the path, drawing Grace after him. He continued his way for a few yards, then crouched to the ground, the young girl following his example. Block and the rest of the party did the same. In this position they remained, until they had seen the tops of the natives' spears go past them; the savages supposing that the fugitives were ahead. Then rising, they continued forcing their way through the shrubbery, until they found themselves in a deep valley, containing a number of rocks, and

shadowed by overarching branches of trees. Here they paused in order that the young girl might rest herself, though she declared that she yet had strength enough remaining to go much further. There was a small stream in the valley, and from this Tom Rocket brought her a cup of cool water, with which she bathed her forehead and temples.

"I'm afraid we'll have a preponderous time in getting the lass out of the present calamitous position," Block remarked in a whisper to Capstan, "though she's a true woman—one of the Mrs. Blocks all over—and bears everything without a rumour."

"Ay, ay," replied Capstan, "and—hark! what is that?"

Every man sprung to his feet: a rustling noise was heard among the bushes that skirted one side of the valley. The next moment the curved nose of Professor Quill, again bridged by his green spectacles, was thrust over the top of a clump of shrubbery.

"Why, dear me! So you are here!" he said, as he advanced. "I am so glad they didn't overtake you."

"We owe you many thanks!" cried Grace, impulsively.

"Ay, ay, so we do!" exclaimed Capstan. "You are a brave man, after all, professor."

"Well, I'm not quite a coward, I believe," answered Quill, "and I'm not quarrelsome either."

"And yet, I'd judge you'd been a-dealin' blows, my lad, by the looks of your sleeve," cried Tom Rocket, "seeing as there's spots of blood upon it."

"Why, bless me, yes! So there are!" cried Quill. "The truth is that the savages, when they saw you were gone, left one of their number to guard me, while the rest started off in pursuit. We were quite sociable over

the spectacles—my companion and I—until it suddenly struck me that I might make my escape. So away I went, but the native being the best runner, soon overtook me, and aimed a blow at my head with his club. This I dodged, and then ran him through with my cutlass—that was all, really. Afterward, I dashed off through the shrubbery, taking a direction which, I am glad to perceive, has led me here.”

“Well, well,” said Capstan, “I don’t know, after all, as l’arning does make cowards of all, but—”

“There was never a greater ‘new-for-wrong’ in the world than that idea!” interrupted Block, “it’s a gilded conscience, not l’arning, that makes cowards.”

CHAPTER VII.

LOKO! LOKO! LOKO!

“I BELIEVE you are right,” said Capstan, “after all. And now,” he added, “we will continue our way, and try if we can’t find some better hiding-place than is afforded by this valley. The natives will be sure to look for us here before long.”

Accordingly, the party rose from the rock upon which they had been sitting, and striking into a narrow path that led through a miniature grove of banana plants, moved on in single file, Grace occupying the centre, between Block and Capstan. They had not gone far, when they saw smoke rising above the tops of a thick mass of bread-fruit trees, about a hundred yards ahead. The foremost man stopped, and turning, motioned to the rest to halt.

“I see a cluster of huts,” he whispered, “and men, women, and children.”

"We must try another direction, then," said the skipper. "We will file to the right."

They did so, and after they had pursued their new course for a mile, they found themselves in another valley. Its sides were thickly covered with brushwood, which, in some places, almost concealed the entrances to the caves and hollows among a confused pile of rocks.

"We will go no further, Block," said Capstan, halting the party. "If I mistake not we're now close upon the beach that borders the strait. Here we'll hide ourselves until night, when we'll make for the beach, from which I shall send you and the men to the other island to see whether or not the cutter is safe and sound. If it is, you shall launch it, and bring it to the beach, where Grace and I will be awaiting for you."

"An excellent idea!" cried Block, "if we can once get hold of the cutter again, we may contrive easily enough to preclude the vigilance of our enemies and get away."

So saying, he followed the rest of the party into a cave in one of the rocks. The skipper, with the assistance of his mate, contrived to arrange a mass of brushwood in such a manner that, while it concealed the entrance to their retreat, it yet admitted light enough to enable them to see each other's faces. One of the men, who, while among the banana plants, had filled a large canvas bag with the fruit, now poured the "golden treasures" upon the ground. Of these the party made a hearty meal, afterward regaling themselves with the milk of the cocoa-nut. They heard nothing to cause alarm until many hours had passed, when a sudden rustling in the shrubbery near the cave made them all start. Peering

through small openings in the artificial screen, Capstan beheld the hideous face of a savage within a few yards of him. The native kept turning his eyes from side to side in an eager, suspicious manner, as though he felt convinced that the fugitives were not far off. Very soon, all were startled upon seeing the piercing orbs of the islander become fixed with a searching gaze upon the small twigs and branches by which they were concealed. Grace felt her heart beat loud and fast: it seemed to her that the man must see them now. There he stood, bending eagerly forward with his long spear in one hand and a heavy club in the other. He was tall and athletic, with shoulders of herculean breadth, and very long arms. His face, painted and covered with scars, was more hideous than any she had yet seen. She was, therefore, much relieved when the native, after continuing his survey several minutes longer, turned round and walked off quite leisurely, as though he had seen nothing to excite his suspicions.

"A narrow escape that," whispered Block. "I thought we would sartainly be individualized by that lubber's imperceptible glances."

"I am not so sartain that he did not discover us!" said Capstan, uneasily. "P'raps he knows we are here, and has gone off to inform some of his brethren."

"Oh, dear me! yes," said the professor, "that is quite likely, for, of course, he would not have ventured to attack us alone."

"In that case, the sooner we leave this place the better," responded the skipper. "It is nearly twilight already, and we'll soon be a-having the night shadows to help us."

"Suppose I go to reconsider," said the mate. "I

think that would be the best way before we venture to quit our retreat."

Capstan consenting, Block cautiously crawled out of the cave. He made his way to the foot of a cocoanut-tree that rose from a small open space of ground beyond the valley. Then, carefully looking round him to make sure that none of his enemies were in his vicinity, he threw off his shoes and climbed the tree. He was soon upon one of the topmost branches, a position that afforded him a good view of the island and the open sea. He was pleased upon discovering that the strait was only a quarter of a mile off.

"That's a highly entertaining sarcumstance," he muttered, "but, 'misfortunately,' there isn't a single canoe upon the beach. When we go for the cutter, we'll have to swim across that bit of water, and—"

He paused upon seeing a group of Malays and savages suddenly make their appearance upon the summit of a small ridge of land, a little to the left of the beach, headed by a native, whose figure certainly bore a striking resemblance to the one which had alarmed the party in the cave. The dusky band were not more than a quarter of a mile off and were rapidly approaching. Block felt that there was not a moment to lose. He quickly descended the tree, and, hurrying to the cave, made known his discovery. The party were ready to leave in an instant. Quitting their retreat, they cautiously but swiftly glided through the shrubbery, and, pursuing a course that carried them far to the rear of their enemies, they succeeded in gaining the beach by nightfall. The darkness was intense, with the exception of a gleam of silvery light in the eastern horizon, where the upper edge of the moon's disc had just become visible.

"Quick, Block! quick, my lads!" said Capstan. "Now is the time—before the moon rises—to go for the cutter. You can all swim, I believe."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the response, and shoes and jackets were thrown to the ground.

The men were soon in the water, headed by Block. The faint outlines of their heads disappeared a few minutes after from the gaze of the captain and his fair companion. But by the time they had gained the middle of the strait, a long broad stream of light from the rising orb, revealed them to the two spectators. The latter now fairly held their breath with suspense. By looking from any of the high ridges of land in the interior of the isle, the natives might easily have seen those dark heads moving through the waves. Soon, however, the beach was gained, and, creeping upon their hands and knees, the men disappeared around the base of the headland.

"They will soon have the cutter," whispered Capstan; "that is, provided them rascals didn't discover and destroy it, while they were on the island. Once in the boat, my dear girl, we'll at least have a better chance than we have now."

"But will the Malays not pursue us in their boats the same as before?"

"I think not at present. They've probably sent ashore the greater part of their men, and before they can get ready to follow us, we'll have the start of them by a league."

"Oh, I am glad to hear that!" she said, trying to seem pleased, "and—hark," she suddenly interrupted, laying a trembling hand upon his arm, "did you hear that?"

"No—what?"

"The cracking of a branch! It has stopped now."

They listened attentively for a repetition of the noise, and ere long it was again heard—this time more distinctly than before.

"There are several persons," he said; "I know that by the noise that is made. I will go a little way to reconnoitre."

"No—no—not for the world, my friend—you—"

"Be not alarmed—stay here. I'll soon come back. It is important I should find out the direction they're going, so as to know whether or not to quit this position."

Though much alarmed, yet she offered no further objection, knowing that it would prove useless. He left her, creeping cautiously upon his hands and knees through a narrow archway formed by the interlacing of branches and vines above a crooked and narrow path. In a few moments he was lost to her view. With clasped hands and an anxious countenance, she bent forward and peered into the gloom. Suddenly she heard the sharp report of firearms, quickly followed by a wild cry. A moment later, a figure came staggering toward her. It was soon so near that she recognised Capstan.

"Fly!" he gasped hoarsely, and fell at her feet in the agonies of death.

Then she heard a yell, followed by the rushing of many footsteps. She threw a farewell glance upon the blood-stained brow of her wounded protector, staggered a few yards, and then, half-fainting, crawled amid the shrubbery that lined the bank. Luckily the sand was too dry and hard to take the impression of her slender feet, otherwise the party of savages and Malays, who now emerged upon the beach, must have tracked her at once. As it was,

they passed so close to her hiding-place, that she might easily have touched one of them with her hand. They returned a moment later, and very soon she heard a noise that made her shudder. It was the splash of the dead body as it was thrown into the water. Not long afterward, she heard the party move into the shrubbery: through little openings among the twigs and leaves, she saw them crouch to the ground, with their backs turned toward her. Their low voices then broke upon her ear: a startling suspicion flashed into her mind. These men having seen the swimmers, and guessed their intentions, were lurking in ambush in order to attack them when they should return:

She must prevent this, if possible !

Cautiously emerging from her place of concealment, she glided rapidly along, upon her hands and knees, keeping in the shadow of the bank. She continued her way until an abrupt curve afforded her a position from which she could watch for the appearance of her friends without being seen by her enemies. Plucking a scarf from her shoulders, the brave girl stood ready to motion the seamen back the moment they should greet her vigilant gaze. But, while still watching the opposite beach with painful anxiety, she heard behind her, the noise of advancing footsteps ; together with that of a chorus of savage voices.

"Loko ! Loko ! Loko !"

The word was shrieked forth with startling vehemence: it rose distinctly above the crashing of shrubbery and the trampling of feet. She turned and crouched to the sand, her terror depriving her of the strength to move. A moment later, a tall, half-naked figure, with a hideously-painted face, came bounding over the top of the bank.

She uttered a faint cry and became unconscious. A loud exclamation broke from the islander: he stooped, lifted her in his arms with wonderful ease, and bore her to the edge of the sea, where, half concealed by a flat rock, lay a canoe large enough to contain three persons. This he launched with one hand, then placing the senseless form in the vessel, sprung in himself and paddled swiftly away from the shore. He had not proceeded more than a hundred yards, when a dozen fierce savages rushed over the top of the bank and bounded to the beach. Yelling, screaming, and gesticulating, they stood gazing toward the receding canoe. The name previously heard was shrieked forth again and again.

“Loko! Loko! Loko!”

But Loko did not seem to heed them. He continued to ply his paddles with the same vigour as before, and soon, to the eyes of the spectators, the canoe looked like a mere chip. Then its occupant, for the first time since quitting the beach, stopped paddling, and seemed to gaze with much interest upon the pale face of the senseless girl. Scooping up some water in the hollow of his hand, he bathed her forehead, her temples, and her long bright hair. But, while thus occupied, he suddenly heard the loud rushing of water upon his right. He turned and saw the schooner dashing swiftly along toward him. She was already but a hundred yards from the canoe. He seized his paddles and turned the head of his light vessel away from the approaching craft, as though intending to make an effort to escape. Then, as if aware of the uselessness of such an attempt, he dashed down the implement and quietly watched the schooner as she came on. She was soon within a few fathoms; her topsail was backed, and she luffed up into the wind. Then the fair

smooth face of a youth of twenty was thrust over the quarter-rail.

"Who are you? What are you doing here?" he exclaimed. "Come aboard at once, or I'll blow you to pieces!"

The islander directed the canoe alongside: a Malay threw him a rope, and he fastened it to the light craft. The dark faces of five of the pirates now appeared at the rail, and looking up, Loko encountered their fierce glances directed toward himself and his fair companion. She had by this time recovered her senses.

"How came I here?" she said, rising to her knees and glancing round her in a bewildered manner.

She saw the island far behind her; the remembrance of past events rushed suddenly upon her mind. With half-shrinking eyes she studied the hideous countenance of her companion, whom she soon recognised as the same islander she had seen on top of the bank. From him, her glances wandered to the schooner, to the dark faces peering over the rail, and, uttering a cry of terror, she hid her face with her hands. Loko inclined his head toward her as though about to speak, but before he could do so, the bight of a rope was thrown over him, and he was jerked unceremoniously to the deck. Then a Malay sprang into the canoe, and, lifting Grace from her feet, passed her to his shipmates, who drew her quickly over the rail. A moment later, the prisoners were surrounded by the five pirates, whose bloodshot eyes and unsteady heads proclaimed that they had been drinking deeply. Grace was so terrified that she could scarcely stand, but the islander returned the fierce glances of the pirates with a steady unflinching gaze. Soon the youth who had hailed the canoe made his appearance. Motioning the other seamen

back, he eyed the two prisoners attentively. The light of the moon falling full upon him, revealed a countenance almost as smooth and delicate as that of a girl. There was, notwithstanding, an expression of cruelty in his brilliant black eyes, and his thin compressed lips, that alarmed the missionary's daughter much more than did the frowns and fierce ejaculations of the Malays. He wore a red cloth cap, with a yellow tassel, a pair of dark blue pants, and a white shirt.

"Can you speak English?" he inquired abruptly of the islander, after he had surveyed him for some time.

"Little; not too much," answered Loko.

"You are one of the natives of yonder island, are you not?"

"Dat so—me belong dere."

"And why did you leave it in the way you've done? Where were you going with this girl?"

"Me see girl lying on beach—faint away. T'ink good time to carry off, and—and—make wife. Carry to some island far away, where oders no find me."

"She is one of those who escaped from the merchant ship, is she not?"

"Me t'ink so."

"And don't you know that I made, this morning, a bargain with one of your painted brethren. He agreed to deliver into my hands the boat's crew, which he had hidden somewhere on the island, in exchange for so much cloth and tobacco. I immediately sent ashore all my men, with the exception of five you see before you, and the helmsman, to bring that crew to the schooner. They have been absent a long time, and—"

"Yes—yes!" interrupted Loko, "all dat me know. Interpreter speak me 'bout de bargain he make with you."

Reason crew no come back me t'ink is, 'cause white man get away from where he been put, and hide where no find him yet."

"And in the meantime you find this girl, who is one of those we are after, and try to cheat us out of her by carrying her off yourself!" cried the young captain, fiercely.

"No t'ink you want girl," replied Loko, "t'ink want men—dat all. S'pose me know you want girl, me bring quick."

"I have a mind to string you up to the yard-arm!" continued the captain. "If I thought you really intended to swindle me out of the girl, I would do so at once."

"Oh! no, me honest—me no want to do that, T'ink you good man; got plenty cloth and tobacco!"

"Well, then, jump into your canoe, and go back to the island as fast as you can. I will not harm you at present. But look out how you meddle with my affairs in future."

"Me no care go back to island," replied Loko; "been sailor in ship once—same ship wid Interpreter;—like to be sailor again: will sail in dis schooner, if you like."

The captain eyed the speaker keenly, from head to foot. He was tall, broad-shouldered, and active, and having been a sailor before, there was no reason why he should not be accepted.

"It's all right," said the young man, after a moment's reflection, "I will take you. But understand," he added, while a fierce gleam shot from his black eyes, "you must obey all my orders promptly, or you are a dead man!"

"Oh! yes, yes, me understand," Loko coolly replied; "nebber you fear. Me know my business."

"I will soon decide that point," replied the captain.
 "Do you see that jib?"

"Ay, ay, he been hauled down," promptly answered the islander, looking toward the boom.

"Well," continued the youth, drawing forth a gold watch, "lay out there and furl it. If it isn't stowed in five minutes, I shall hang you."

Loko smiled, but did not move.

"Did you hear me?" cried the pirate, fiercely, "in five minutes, or you're a dead man."

"Dere no hurry," quietly answered the islander. "Me can furl in one—two—t'ree minutes. Nebber take five."

"We shall see," responded the captain. "Take your own time if you choose. I have no objection to seeing you hung."

Loko seated himself on the fore-hatch, and drawing a wooden pipe and a match from beneath the cloth about his waist, was soon enjoying a quiet smoke. The captain's eye was fixed steadily upon his watch; a minute and a-half had already passed since he issued his order. A few seconds after, Loko rose, darted out upon the boom, and with wonderful activity commenced to gather up the sail. In two minutes, he had finished his task; the sail had never before been so neatly furled. A murmur of astonishment broke from the Malays; even the Captain looked surprised.

"You are a smart blueskin!" cried the youth, "and if you prove as expert with the cutlass as you are in handling canvas, I think I shall promote you."

Then directing at Grace a glance that made her shudder, he bade her follow him to the cabin. He extended his hand as he spoke, but she shrunk back, pale and trembling.

"Come!" he cried, laughing, "don't be afraid. A pretty way, this, to treat your future husband. I have never had a wife, but should like one, by way of variety."

"For heaven's sake," faltered Grace, moving quickly toward the rail, "let me leave this vessel! I—"

"No, no!" interrupted the captain, "that must never be. I cannot let my bird fly after I have caught it!"

He threw himself between her and the rail, and seizing one of her arms, ordered a Malay to grasp the other. Before the man could obey, Loko quickly advanced and took hold of her disengaged arm. The girl struggled vainly to release herself; she was hurried aft to the companionway and into the cabin. At the foot of the staircase, however, the islander let go of her arm, and breaking suddenly from the pirate, she bounded up the steps and was on deck in an instant.

"Why did you let go of her?" exclaimed the captain, directing, as he sprung toward the companionway, a fierce glance upon the islander. Loko darted forward, struck the speaker heavily upon the temple with his clenched fist, and, as the youth fell senseless at his feet, rushed upon deck. He found Grace struggling in the grasp of the helmsman, who had seized her to prevent her from jumping overboard. The brute had caught hold of her long hair, and was dragging her toward the cabin. The rest of the Malays, taking advantage of the captain's absence, had gone into the forecabin before the young girl reappeared on deck. Springing upon the wretch, the islander knocked him down with a blow of his fist, and assisted the maiden to rise. The man jumped to his feet, however, and picking up a wooden belaying-pin, hurled it at Loko's head. The pin, missing its destination, struck Grace near the temple, and she dropped senseless into the

arms of the islander. Seeing him thus burdened, the pirate drew a knife, and rushed toward him. But, stepping quickly backward, he laid the girl upon the main-hatch, and seizing a crow-bar lying near him, dealt his antagonist a blow that felled him to the deck. The noise made by the men in the fore-castle—for they were shouting and singing hilariously—had drowned that of the brief conflict outside, so that the islander was now enabled to make his way to the canoe and put his burden therein without being discovered. He was soon paddling swiftly away from the schooner in the direction of a sail which was faintly distinguishable in the moonlight, far away to the eastward. Occasionally, he would throw an anxious glance upon the pale face of the senseless girl, and when he had left the schooner a league behind him, he stopped paddling, and, in the same manner as he had done before, strove to restore his fair charge to her senses. While thus engaged, he fancied that he heard the sound of oars. Turning his eyes in the direction of the noise, he saw two boats speeding swiftly along, apparently in chase of him. The foremost of the two vessels was less than a league from the canoe, and the other about the same distance astern of the leading boat. They had hitherto been screened from his view by the schooner, which, having no man at the helm, had now swung off a couple of points. With an exclamation of surprise, the islander seized his paddle, and, fixing his eyes upon the distant sail which was evidently approaching, he urged his light vessel through the water with great rapidity.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIPLE RACE.

BLOCK and his little party succeeded in gaining the rocks where the cutter had been concealed. They found the boat lying exactly as they had left it, and, at length, after working pretty hard, contrived to launch it.

"There!" cried the mate, as the boat splashed in the water, "that difficulty is exterminated at last. Jump in, my lads, and let us no longer refrain from gaining the spot where we left our two friends!"

The men sprung to their thwarts, and promptly seizing their oars soon pulled the vessel into the strait.

"Now, then," said Block, as he directed the cutter toward the spot where he had left Grace and the captain, "everything impends upon your exertions. The moon shines brightly; there's every prospectus of our being seen. So pull like thunderbolts, my lads."

The men laid back to their oars with a will, and in a short time the boat was within twenty yards of the beach. Then the mate suddenly sprung to his feet and ordered the crew to stop pulling. They did so, and leaning forward Block carefully scrutinised the beach and the shrubbery lining the bank.

"I may have been mistaken," he whispered, "but I thought I disentangled the point of a spear, intruded for an instant above the top of them bushes."

"Oh, dear me!" ejaculated the professor, turning his green spectacles toward the shore, "I hope not. I have items enough for my journal already."

"I am sure I saw it," continued the mate, in a musing tone, "and what is still more auspicious, I haven't yet seen the forms of either Capstan or the girl. The figure

of the skipper, as you all know," he added, raising his voice, "is plump enough to be popular. I don't think a cautious reconsidering would be out of place."

"I will go," promptly answered Quill. "I pride myself upon being a good swimmer."

"All right, professor, you may go. But be careful not to protrude yourself heedlessly into danger."

The professor dropped over the gunwale into the water, and swam toward the beach. He was soon upon the shore, so that the party concealed in the shrubbery had a plain view of his person. One of them, a Malay, aimed a pistol at his heart, and would have fired, had not the Interpreter, who was seated near him, grasped his arm.

"S'pose you fire, den oders go away. Best not fire, best not give 'larm; den all come 'shore!" he whispered.

Just then the professor started and stooping, closely examined a dark red stain upon the sand at his feet.

"Oh, dear me!" he muttered, after he had surveyed it for a few minutes, "that is blood, or I am much mistaken."

He turned away and commenced peering into the shrubbery, every moment expecting to behold the dead bodies of Capstan and the young girl. Soon he was so near the spot where the party were concealed, that the man nearest to the edge of the bank might have touched him by stretching out his hand. A moment later, he saw them; encountered the gleam of their fierce eyeballs, looking in the darkness of their retreat like those of tigers when prepared for a spring. With a single bound he cleared the strip of beach and plunged into the water just in time to escape a bullet and the point of a whistling spear.

The next moment, a dozen dark figures sprang from

the shrubbery and dashed after him. But, swimming rapidly under water, he contrived to gain the boat while his pursuers were yet five or six yards behind him.

"Now, then, lads!" cried Block, in a shrill voice, "let us see what you are comprised of. Pull, pull, every man, like thunderbolts!"

The crew cheered, each man whirled his oar through the water with the rapidity of a mill-wheel, and the boat flew like a discharged arrow toward the open sea.

Soon the dusky swimmers returned to the beach, and, after they had fired a few useless shots, they were seen running swiftly along the shore.

"Ay, ay, there they go, after their boat, I'm thinking!" cried the mate, "they'll soon be at our heels!"

"And yonder," said Tom Rocket, throwing a glance over his shoulder, "lies the schooner with her topsail aback. We mustn't go too close to her!"

"It's my opinion that she now hasn't men enough aboard of her to man a boat to pursue us. I don't think I can ever feel light-hearted again, lads," he continued, with a sigh; "for its very improvident now that Capstan and the girl have been murdered. That stain of blood in the sand proves it!"

"Why, bless me!" cried the professor, "it's enough to make us all heavy-hearted. The unhappy fate of the young girl and the skipper will make a sad item for my journal."

While the crew were thus expressing their sorrow, Block suddenly rose, and gazed long and steadily toward the eastern seaboard.

"Ay, ay," he exclaimed at last, "I thought so! it's a sail!" I've been a-looking at it for the last ten minutes, thinking it was a sea-bird."

"That's good news!" cried Tom Rocket, "but it would seem much more joyful like if we had the girl and Capstan among us. It's been a sad business the loss of them, even though they've gone to the 'Elysian Fields!'"

"Ay, ay," cried Block; "and though they say that Providence does everything for the best, I can't help a-thinking that this is a decisive 'new-for-wrong.'"

"P'raps, if they hadn't died in the way they seem to have done, hows'ever," said Tom, "they might have died in one which was all the harder! They've gone to the thrones of heaven, which I'm told is of solid gold. Them's the blessin's of Christianity."

"Really," said Block, "you will permit me to observe that you take a highly indispensable view of the subject. Them that goes to heaven fairly rolls in the wealth of righteous principalities, which is far superior to gold. Them's the expectations of the humble, which has led a pure and superstitious life!"

Just as he concluded, the Malay's boat was seen shooting from behind the promontory that projected from one end of the island. The crew of the cutter could hear the shouts and yells of the pirates as they strained at their oars. Having a good start of them, however, the fugitives doubted not that they would succeed in reaching the sail ahead in time to escape their pursuers. Soon, while passing astern of the schooner, they heard an exclamation of surprise from Block. About a league ahead, he saw the outline of the canoe occupied by Loko and his senseless companion. Although the head and shoulders of the islander were visible, the girl, of course, could not be seen, as she was lying in the bottom of the vessel.

"Ay, ay, I'll be swung up!" exclaimed the mate, "if I don't think it's him—that same reconsidering rascal

sharp crack of a musket came from the vessel in chase, and pressing his hand upon his side, the islander fell to the bottom of the canoe. With a low cry, the young girl bent over him, looking down upon his upturned face. The blood was flowing from a wound just above his right hip; she believed that he was dying. He smiled faintly, and tried to speak, but only a faint murmur came from his lips.

The next moment, Grace heard the dull booming of a heavy gun, then the howling of a shot over her head, followed by a loud crash behind her, and turning, she saw the shattered jib-boom of the schooner drop into the sea. The vessel tacked at once, and stood off, hoisting the recall signal for her boat. This was now within twenty yards of the cutter; and, firing a farewell volley at the fugitives, its occupants, with a yell of disappointment, began to pull for their vessel. They were soon aboard, and the boat was then hoisted up.

"Three cheers, my lads!" cried Block, turning toward his crew, not one of whom had been injured by the shots of the pirates; "three cheers! The schooner is showing her heels! Our preservation is identified!"

Off went the hats of the crew, and the cheers were heartily given—the professor in his excitement, throwing his smoking-cap into the sea.

"That was a pretty shot," cried Tom Rocket, as the men again seized their oars. "It took off the schooner's boom as neatly as a whistle. There's no doubt, now that yonder fellow"—pointing toward the approaching craft—"is a sloop-of-war. I thought so, from the first."

"Ay, ay," responded Block, "and I shall certainly feel surprised if the pirate escapes her. Why, my eyes!" he added, bending eagerly forward, "if there isn't a figure

that looks ostensibly like that of a female a-sitting in the canoe ahead of us."

All eyes were at once turned in the indicated direction.

"Dear me!" cried the professor, "it was a man a little while ago! it was, really!"

"Pull ahead! pull like thunderbolts!" cried Block, as a sudden suspicion flashed through his mind.

The men exerted themselves, and the cutter was soon within a foot of the canoe.

"Grace Greenville! I suspected so!" cried Block.

She sprung to her feet, and turned with a cry of surprise.

A moment later she was in the boat.

She pointed toward the prostrate figure of the islander in the canoe.

"He was wounded by a shot from the schooner!" she cried, and, remembering the prompt manner in which he had rescued her from the grasp of the Malay, she added, "He has been very friendly to me! For God's sake, let him be put in the boat, and carried as speedily as possible to the vessel which is approaching us."

"Why, bless me—how strange!" exclaimed Professor Quill; "another item for my journal."

"I wouldn't have believed that one of them savages had a sparkle of humanity in his bosom!" cried Block, "if I hadn't heard it from Miss Greenville's own lips! Put him in the boat, lads!"

This was done, and a bright gleam lighted for a moment the dim eyes of the sufferer, as he encountered the glances of the boat's crew.

"Pull ahead!" was ordered, and the oar-blades splashed in the water.

Explanations then ensued between Grace and the mate.

Block was much pained upon learning the particulars of Capstan's death, for he had secretly nourished a faint hope that his old chum had only been wounded, and had crawled to some hiding-place where he might eventually be discovered by the sloop-of-war. This vessel being now only half a league from the boat, the latter was soon alongside. Steps were lowered from the gangway for the accommodation of the young girl, and a bluff-looking sea lieutenant assisted her to the deck. After the islander had been hoisted aboard in a chair, the rest of the party followed. While Block was describing their adventures to the lieutenant, Grace was politely conducted to the cabin. Here, she was gratified to find one of her own sex—the captain's niece, who was on her way to her home in New York, from a visit to cousins, daughters of the American Consul at Honolulu. The kind sympathy and frank but gentle manners of this young lady won the heart of our heroine at once. Before an hour had passed, each felt as though she had known the other for years.

CHAPTER IX.

“BLESS ME, I THOUGHT HE WAS A SAVAGE!”

AFTER Block had concluded his story, quarters were selected for him in the steerage with the midshipmen, while his men were sent forward to mingle with the foremast hands. The islander had been carried to the cockpit, and a surgeon was now dressing his wound.

Meanwhile, all sail having been crowded, the ship was bowling along at the rate of nine knots in chase of the schooner. The character of this vessel was known to the captain of the pursuing craft almost at the moment when he first sighted her. From the skipper of a merchantman

which arrived in the port of Honolulu previous to the departure of the sloop-of-war, he had obtained a good description of the pirate, by which his informant's vessel had been chased during its passage.

"Dear me!" cried the professor of languages, as he peered over the tall bulwarks at the fugitive craft, "I think we are gaining on her, and—"

He was interrupted by the thundering report of one of the ship's long "eighteen's," and the next moment he saw the schooner's mainmast go by the board.

"A good shot," remarked the captain, as he sprung upon a carronade slide and levelled his night-glass at the dismasted vessel, "that'll bring her to if her commander has common sense."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the first lieutenant, "he can't hope to escape us after that. He is luffing up now, I think."

"You are right. But while some of his crew are clearing away the wreck, the rest are lowering the two boats. I don't understand that."

"It certainly looks queer, and if I'm not mistaken, he's bracing round his foreyards."

"Ay, ay, here the rascal comes, making straight for us, as if he were going to run into us!"

"He'll get the worst of the bargain, if he tries that foolish trick," exclaimed the lieutenant. "But look, sir, are not his men climbing over the bulwarks? I think I can see them."

"So they are. The rascals think to escape us by taking to their boats. Luff a little, quartermaster!"

"Luff it is, sir!"

"That will do—steady!"

"Steady she goes, sir!"

Scarcely had the deep-toned response died away, when a dense volume of smoke was seen to roll upward from one of the schooner's hatches, completely screening the boats from the watchful gaze of the ship's crew.

The pirates had set fire to their craft, not only to prevent its falling into the hands of their pursuers, but also to facilitate their escape; for, in order to keep clear of the burning vessel, the captain of the sloop-of-war would be obliged to keep off a point, thus affording his enemies a chance to get some distance to windward.

"That's a cunning trick," said the lieutenant, "and I'm afraid it'll prevent our capturing the rascals."

"I hardly think so," answered the captain, "we'll be after them on a taut bowline, as soon as we get astern of the schooner."

The lieutenant pointed out heavy masses of clouds which were drifting slowly towards the moon.

"It will soon be too dark to see the boats," said he.

"Ay, ay," the captain answered, impatiently, "I'm afraid you are right. Do you see them now?"

"I do. I can just make them out, far to windward of the burning craft."

This vessel was now about a quarter of a mile distant off the lee quarter. The flames had burst through her decks, and were shooting upward in long spiral columns, winding their fiery coils about her solitary mast and her fore-shrouds. Spreading rapidly, they soon covered every part of the doomed vessel, so that she looked like a floating pyramid of fire. The red glare of the conflagration, quivering upon the sky, and far along the waves, formed a singular contrast to the soft and peaceful radiance of the moon. The fore-shrouds of the ship were alive with spectators, among whom the green glasses of

Professor Quill, shining in the reflected light of the burning vessel, were so conspicuous as to attract considerable attention.

"My eyes, Bill," remarked one of the men to a shipmate, "that 'ere's the oddest lookin' lubber I ever did see. I wonder where he hails from?"

"Don't know," replied Bill, "but his chum told me that he has lots of l'arnin'—enough to sink a seventy-four."

"Ay, ay, now, blow me, but I thought so!" exclaimed the other, "them that wears goggles always has l'arnin'. I never knowed it to fail yet."

"Dear me!" ejaculated the professor, at this juncture, "what a beautiful pyrotechnical display. I must describe it in my journal."

Bill and his chum exchanged glances, and nodded.

"Did you hear that, Tom?" whispered the former, "did you hear that? There's l'arnin' for you—pyrotacknuckle!"

"Ay, ay, he's got the dictionary at his fingers' ends—he has," answered Tom. "And it's as well, mate," he added, solemnly, "for sich chaps as us not to be a-trying to repeat them big words after him."

"Why not? That's the way to require l'arnin' ourselves."

Tom put one of his fingers upon the tip of his nose, and eyed his chum mysteriously.

"There was once upon a time," he whispered, "that my ideas was similar to your'n; but that time's passed and gone, and it happened this way: When I was a-cruising in the Bombay, Captain Jenks, d'ye see, we had a chap named Munk for a shipmate, that was famous for his l'arnin', and another chap named Tom Tackle that

wasn't; a chap he was whose ignoramus was perfectly wonderful. Being quite anxious-like, hows'ever, to require l'arnin', he used to get Munk to speak long words for him, and he'd speak 'em after him. Well, mate, one day Munk gets off a mighty long word—a word as was most astonishin', and would have made your hair stand on end to hear. Open goes Tackle's mouth to repeat it after him; but, my eyes! it was too much for him. He sprung his jaw in trying so that he couldn't close his mouth again, and his mouth has kept open ever since, a living monument of the ambition of them that would know more than their shipmates."

Before Tom could reply, a loud crash was heard, followed by a burst of admiration from Quill. The schooner's foremast had fallen into the sea, and a shower of sparks, was now whirling upward from the roaring, crackling waves of flame.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" cried the professor; "but it will soon be over!"

"Ay, ay," exclaimed Block, "who had quitted the steerage and mounted the fore shrouds, to obtain a good view of the blazing craft. It will soon be over with the schooner. The fire is involuntarily devouring every timber of the little vessel. Her dissolution is ineffable!"

"I tell you what it is, Bill," whispered Tom, "here's some more l'arnin'."

"Why, yes," returned his chum. "Blow my eyes if I don't think we've got into good company, and—"

He was interrupted by the order to "tack ship," and, together with his shipmates, he quitted the shrouds and sprung to the braces. The yards were soon hauled round, and heading upon a course which would carry her astern of the schooner, and in the track of the boats she rushed

through the water at the rate of eight knots. The crew then continued to watch the receding flames, until, having devoured nearly every plank and timber of the doomed craft, they went out among the waves of the sea.

"Ay, ay," muttered Block, "that's the last of her, and it's by no means inconsolable to see an institution of her character demoralised in this manner. Let all sinners take warnin' from the present statement of affairs, that they don't involve their heads in criminality."

"You are something of a philosopher, I perceive," observed a little midshipman at his elbow.

"Not exactly, my lad—not exactly. You've committed a sort of 'new-for-wrong' there, nat'ral to youngsters of your age. Though I may say, without comprehension, that I'm not wholly devoid of the 'promising spark,' yet I'm not much of a philosopher, except where women's consarned. The dictionary, hows'ever, is my principal 'forty.'"

The midshipman grinned.

"Perhaps you are enough of a philosopher," said he, "to tell me whether or not we'll succeed in capturing the boats to-night."

"Phrenologically considered," answered Block, striking an attitude, "I don't think we will. It's now as dark as pitch, and I think we're going to have a heavy gale. It's my opinion that the boats will get swamped."

Even as he spoke, the whistling of the blast was heard among the shrouds, and the ship suddenly keeled over to larboard. The pipe to furl sails was given, and was soon followed by the order to strike to'gallant yards and masts. The men flew to their stations with the activity of squirrels, and, in a short time, the vessel was ready to meet the full fury of the storm. Howling, roaring, and shriek-

ing, it came at last, driving her through the water with terrific velocity, and whirling clouds of spray over her bulwarks. Her timbers groaned like human beings in mortal agony, her three masts swaying to and fro, creaked forth their complaints to the blast, while the seas, rising higher and higher every moment, came crashing and roaring over her weather-rail.

The gale continued to rage with great violence until daylight, when, the wind hauling round to the north'ard, it abated sufficiently to enable the ship to carry whole topsails. Midshipmen were then sent aloft with glasses, to look for the boats; but after scrutinizing the sea in all directions, they reported nothing in sight.

"Ay, ay, the boats have been swamped beyond a doubt," said the captain, addressing his first lieutenant; "they couldn't have lived in such a sea as that of last night. We may as well put the ship upon her course."

This was done, and, as the gale continued to abate, the vessel was soon bowling along under additional sail.

Before noon the wind had subsided to a moderate breeze, and the clouds having broken, the rays of the sun glittered brightly upon the crests of the heaving waves.

Then the two girls, Louisa and Grace, came on deck, and, taking a position near the weather quarter-rail, chatted pleasantly while watching the sea-birds skim over the tops and along the ridges of the rolling billows.

While thus occupied, they heard a step behind them, and turning, beheld the old surgeon, who had been to the cockpit, and was now proceeding toward the cabin. He politely lifted his cap and was passing on, when Grace ventured to inquire as to the condition of the invalid.

"He is getting on very well," replied the surgeon, "and I have no doubt that he will recover."

"Does he suffer much pain?"

"Not a great deal."

"Is he able to speak?"

"Oh, yes. I may add that I never before heard an islander speak so well. He inquired about you, and upon my informing him that you were safe and in good health, he seemed much pleased, and said that he would like to see you."

"And surely!" cried Grace, impulsively, "he should not be denied this poor gratification."

A smile flitted for an instant across the face of the surgeon.

"It can do no harm," he said, after a moment's reflection, "so we will go to him at once."

"And I will go with you," said Louisa, "I feel much sympathy for the poor native."

To this he could make no objection, and so both girls were conducted to the cockpit.

Upon their entrance, the sufferer, who was lying in a rude bunk, turned his face toward them, when Grace uttered an exclamation of astonishment, for she recognized the well-known features of Guy Loring.

"Why! How is this?" murmured Louisa, in a low voice, "I thought he was a savage."

"And so he was, until this morning," replied the surgeon, smiling, and speaking in the same low tone, "when he called for soap and water, and, by washing the stains from his face, he transformed himself into a white man; after which he informed me that his name was Guy Loring, and that he had been second mate of the *Rainbow*."

Louisa cast a shy glance at Grace from the corners of her eyes. The fair orphan had advanced to the side of the

wounded man, and, unknown to herself, there was a world of pity and tenderness in her soft eyes as she looked down upon his face.

"I never thought we should see you again," she faltered, "and, even now, I can hardly persuade myself that I am not dreaming."

"And the surgeon did not deceive me. You are safe—safe and well!" murmured Loring, his eyes shining with pleasure.

"Yes, thanks to your brave exertions," she replied. "You have acted nobly, and God will reward you. I owe you a debt of gratitude which—"

"You owe me nothing," he interrupted, and the wistful light now burning in his dark eyes covered her cheeks with blushes. "You owe me nothing. Your safety is my reward for what little I have done for you. Had you been killed or injured, I could never have known a moment's peace in this world. And now," he added, changing the subject, "I owe you an explanation—"

"Not now—not now!" she cried; "wait until you are stronger."

"Oh! no," he replied, "it does not hurt me to talk. My story may be told in a few words."

Then, pausing a moment, as if to collect his thoughts, he began the recital of his adventures since he parted from his friends in the cutter. It shall be our task to take up the thread of his narrative at the point where we left off in a preceding chapter.

"My slumber," said he, "upon the mats in the chieftain's hut must have been very deep; for, when I awoke, I discovered that my hands and feet were tied with ropes, and that I was deprived of my clothing, for which was substituted a piece of cloth fastened around my waist.

There was a smarting sensation about my cheeks and forehead, for which I could not account, until the same old woman of whom I have already spoken came to my side with a piece of looking-glass, and, stooping, held it before my eyes. To my astonishment, I perceived that my face was painted or rather stained in a hideous manner, being covered with circles, dots, squares, and crosses of blue and yellow. The old woman seemed to enjoy my consternation. She chuckled, grinned, and glared at me exultingly, pointing to my reflection in the glass, and screeching forth the word 'Loko,' several times, which I suppose was the new name by which I had been 'christened.' I was puzzled to account for the reason of my having been disfigured in the way I have mentioned, until I suddenly remembered that the Interpreter had informed me that it was the chief's intention to keep me for one of his warriors, and to prevent my being carried off by any of the white men who might visit the island. I raised myself upon my elbow and looked round for Mono, but he had gone. The hag and I were now the only persons in the hut. I glanced at the ropes around my wrists, and, by the manner in which they were tied, I felt sure that I could work my hands clear of them in the course of a few hours.

"And what then? The chances were ten to one that I would be recaptured if I attempted to escape, for the sound of voices without proclaimed that there were natives in the vicinity of the hut. Happening to glance toward the entrance, however, which commanded a view of the sea, I saw far away to the eastward, distinctly visible in the red light of the setting sun, a small speck, which I knew was a sail. This was encouraging, and the old woman, having now seated herself in her corner, I

turned myself upon my side, and cautiously set about the task of freeing my hands. As I had supposed would be the case, I was several hours in accomplishing my purpose. Though the moon had, by this time, risen, yet the interior of the hut was quite dark, so that I was now able to free my ankles without being detected by my solitary guard. She had lighted her pipe, and a small stream of light enabled me to see her head, which was bowed upon her breast while she smoked. I sprung up, rushed past her, and ran toward the beach, where I hoped to find a canoe; but I had not proceeded far, when I heard the cries of the old woman, followed by the yells of her savage brethren, who were now in pursuit of me.

"Having had the start, however, I gained the top of a bank which overlooked the beach while they were yet some distance behind. At the foot of the bank, to my unbounded astonishment, I beheld a female figure, and, the face being turned toward me, I recognized your features. You uttered a cry of terror—naturally supposing me to be a savage—and swooned. I picked you up, put you in a canoe, lying near the beach, and, springing in myself, paddled off toward the sail of which I have spoken. But being overtaken, notwithstanding my exertions, by the schooner—"

"That will do," Grace gently interrupted: "I know the rest."

He smiled, looked at her earnestly for a moment, and then closed his eyes in slumber.

"That's as it should be," whispered the surgeon. "I gave him an opiate when I visited him before."

"You are sure he will recover?"

"Oh! yes. He will be as well as he ever was in a few months."

As they emerged from the cockpit they encountered Block.

"Good morning, Miss Greenville," said he, "I am sincerely indisposed to meet with you. You will be disinterested to hear that we've just passed a capsized boat, which, it is my opinion, was one of them in which the pirates tried to escape from us, and the other one has probably suffered the same fatality."

"And I have news for you," said Grace, "which will doubtless please you very much. Your shipmate—Loring—is living. He and the savage in the cockpit are one and the same person."

"Why,—why—blow it!—excuse me—oh! my eyes! no—you must be mistaken; there must be some 'new-for-wrong' about that!"

—"I have just left him asleep, below," answered Grace. "You will see him on deck before many weeks have passed."

In a few words she related the young man's adventures, to which Block listened with profound attention. When she had concluded, he drew a long breath, and struck the palm of his right hand with his clenched fist.

"It's perfectly wonderful!" he exclaimed. "I must pay him an invitation at once!"

"Some other time," said the good-natured surgeon; "he is asleep now, and must not be disturbed."

The mate performed an awkward bow.

"Sartainly not! The 'polytechnical' usages of society must not be infringed into. I wish you a good-day while I go and splice hands with my crew—that is the remains of 'em—over the good news."

So saying, he whirled round and made his way forward, in his haste nearly stumbling over the professor, who

was seated upon a gun, very complacently sunning his green spectacles.

"Why, bless me!" he exclaimed, after Block had communicated his good news, "this is really quite astonishing and romantic. It must be put down in my journal at once!"

"I hope," said the mate, as the professor's pencil glided rapidly over the pages of the journal, pulled from beneath his jacket, "I hope you are in the habit of attenuating your phrases, so as not to make 'em too long."

The spectacles rattled: their owner began to sneeze violently, and, losing all patience, Block hurried off to seek the rest of his crew. He was not long in finding them, and great was their joy when the mate unfolded to them his budget of good news; for Loring had always been a favourite with his men.

CHAPTER X.

AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED.

THANKS to a good constitution, the second mate, in the course of a few weeks, was able to leave his bunk and make his way to the deck without assistance. The pure sea breeze aided him in recovering, and, ere long, the glow of health began to appear upon his brown cheek, while his eye grew brighter and his step more firm. Nevertheless, it was doubtful if he felt as happy now as he did while lying helpless in his berth, listening to the gentle voice of Grace Greenville, and basking, as it were, in the light of her soft brown eyes. With her friend Louisa, she had visited him many times, unconsciously winding about his heart a web of silvery network, from which it was destined never to escape. But now—now

that he was strong enough to leave his couch and seek her, her manner toward him was singularly changed. She seemed rather to avoid him than otherwise, and whenever, as seldom happened, he did contrive to gain her ear, she was so shy and reserved, her responses were so few, and, as he chose to imagine, so cold, that he felt his heart sink within him. Unaccustomed to the gentler sex, he at length came to the conclusion that this reserve on her part proceeded from positive dislike of his society.

"Ay, ay, that's it," he muttered, to himself, one morning, as he stood in the lee gangway, with his eyes turned gloomily toward the quarter-deck from which she had just disappeared; "her sympathy for me during my illness was nothing more than what her kind little heart would have felt for any other sufferer. And now that I am well, she evidently wishes to have me understand that such was the case, and to discourage the hopes that I had formed. And what else should I expect? A rude, weather-beaten fellow like me, who has been tossed about by the sea ever since his boyhood! It would be unnatural that a gentle being like her should take any interest in a character of my stamp, and I have been very foolish building air-castles below there in my bunk. But I'll give 'em all up now—ay, ay. I'll give 'em all up, and may God bless the dear girl, and give her somebody more worthy of her than I am!"

"Disapp'inted affliction!" cried a voice behind him, "disapp'inted affliction, and nothing else!"

Loring turned to confront Block.

"I've overheard you, my lad," said that worthy, in a solemn voice; "every word; and allow me to inform you that you've been committing a great 'new-for-wrong' in not making me your confidential from the first!"

"And why should I—"

"Why should you?" interrupted the mate; "why should you? This from my mate, whose obtuseness of intelligence I had 'flatuated' myself was nearly equal to my own! Why, my lad! you know what a perfect chronological I am about women don't ye? Hew I can divine 'em, and exterminate their smallest thoughts in the tyin' of a square knot, and how perfectly they are my 'forty,' to say nothing of the dictionary;—you know all this, don't ye?"

"I will not deny that I have heard Capstan say that you were a man of superior wisdom," Loring replied.

"Ay, ay," said Block, "Capstan depreciated my qualities through a sort of instinct nat'ral to men of his class. And now that he has imperceptibly vanished from this world of inquisitive criminality, it is my duty to instruct them that remains in something beside the hauling of a rope or the sarving of a shroud."

"Thank you," answered the second mate; "I am always glad to be instructed."

"Well, then, lad, as already through your discretion I have obtained a supreme glimpse into the symptoms of the mushroomery's daughter, allow me to state the fact that them women that seems cold is sometimes warm at heart, and them that seems warm is sometimes '*vicious vases*.'"

Loring's countenance brightened; observing which, the first mate placed one of his great horny fingers upon the side of his club nose and groaned:—

"Don't look that way, lad! don't look that way," he cried, "for it goes ag'in my grain to intersperse false hopes in the hearts of them that's smitten. I didn't mean, by what I said, to exhilarate in your mind the idea

that the girl is favourable. No, not by any means. Women is hard to divine, and Miss Grace isn't an 'acceptation.' I have often watched her while you was exarting your conversational liabilities with her, and I must acknowledge that there wasn't nothing about her ways to warrant the presumption of love. I may add, that it is my candid superstition her afflictions is preoccupied with the second officer of this craft, with which I have seen her talking more than once, and—ay, there they are now!" he suddenly interrupted.

Loring turned to witness a spectacle that sent a sharp pang to his heart. Near the weather-rail stood Grace, conversing with the second lieutenant, a tall, handsome, man, whose fine figure was set off to advantage by his neat uniform. The young girl seemed—at least, so thought Loring—much pleased with her stately companion. A continual smile played about her lips, and once she even broke forth into a silvery peal of laughter at some witty remark on his part. Suddenly, however, she glanced toward the spot occupied by Loring. She coloured deeply; the smile faded from her lips; she became quite grave, and all the efforts of her companion to amuse her seemed now of no avail.

"She is angry because she saw me watching them," thought Loring, and turning sadly away, he walked off to another part of the ship.

"Ay, ay," muttered Block, looking after him, "it's a clean case of disapp'inted affliction—a decided 'new-for wrong,' and it'll be more 'disapp'intedest' yet before it's all over. Poor lad—poor lad! I never saw his equal in handling a marlingspike and splicing a brace; yet them qualities are too modest to perspire to the hand of that lass. It's a pity they ever met!"

At that moment, a shrill warning cry came down from aloft, penetrating every corner of the ship.

"Look out there, below—on deck—look out!" and glancing upward, the quick eye of the mate at once detected the cause of the alarm.

A new studding-sail-boom, which was being hoisted to the maintopsail yard, was fast working clear of the rope to which it was attached; so that there was every probability of its falling to the deck before any measures could be taken to prevent the accident.

Startled by the warning shriek that pierced her brain like a knife, and imagining that some great catastrophe was about to happen, such as the falling of the masts, or perhaps even the foundering of the ship, Grace Greenville sprang from the quarter-deck, and fled instinctively to the side of Guy for protection. At the same instant, down came the boom, crashing to the deck, one end of it striking the main fife-rail, and breaking a couple of belaying-pins.

The second mate then conducted the trembling girl back to the quarter-deck, which was now deserted by the ship's officers, who had gone to reprimand the sailor whose carelessness in hitching the rope was the cause of the accident.

"I am ashamed of myself," said Grace, "for being so easily frightened."

"It was perfectly natural that you were," replied Loring, "and I may add, that I feel proud and happy because you came to me for protection. It has inspired me with a hope that perhaps you do not dislike me as much as I had supposed."

She gave him a timid, reproachful glance.

"I was not aware," she said, in a low but earnest voice,

"that I ever gave you any reason to suppose that I disliked you. Far from it, I esteem you very much."

"Bless you for the words!" cried Loring, impulsively, lifting her hand to his lips, "for they have made me a happy man. Ay, ay," he added, gazing tenderly upon her partially averted face, "a happy man, for, though I am a rude sailor, I have dared to love you. You are dearer, far dearer, than all the world to me, and I frankly ask you—feeling at the same time that I am not worthy of such an angel—whether, after what I have said, you will allow me to come and see you after we arrive at New York?"

She did not speak, but her hand dropped as lightly as a snow-flake into his; a tender glance beamed upon him from her soft brown eyes, and the next moment she had disappeared through the companionway.

A few months later, on a clear sunny morning, the sloop-of-war came to an anchor off the Battery, and before noon Grace was in the arms of her aunt, who occupied a neat cottage in the upper part of the city. The second mate called there on the next day, and was cordially welcomed by the old lady, to whom, while relating her perils, the niece had not failed to praise the conduct of her noble lover.

About six weeks after, while seated in a saloon poring over the columns of a daily paper, Block was astonished to find in the marriage list the names of Grace Greenville and Guy Loring.

"Why! this is perfectly wonderful!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet, "to read of them two being spliced! Ay, ay, and for once in my life, I've committed a 'new-for-wrong' in the divining of a woman. I have been

deceived in thinking that she was afflicted with that second lieutenant of the sloop-of-war !”

Subsequently, the marriage notice was also seen by the professor of languages, who now occupied an apartment in the St. Nicholas Hotel.

“Why, dear me !” he exclaimed, carefully adjusting the green spectacles to make sure that his eyes did not deceive him, “this will really make quite an item for my journal ! I must finish it, and look up a publisher as soon as possible !”

Alas ! it never was finished ! The professor was so particular about his language, that he kept revising and improving the journal for ten years, at the end of which time he died—long before he had brought the work to the coveted state of perfection !

A few days after his burial, a little girl of eight years, came to plant flowers over his grave. She was a very pretty, interesting child, with bright golden hair hanging in curls about her face and neck, and with large soft brown eyes. Now and then, while occupied with her simple task, she would pause to listen to the song of a bird, which, from its position upon the bough of a willow-tree, near the tombstone, seemed to watch her with much attention.

“Who knows,” she muttered to herself, after she had looked at it several times, “who knows but that’s Uncle Quill, come to see what I’m about. Mamma says that when people die they go to the spirit land ; but I shouldn’t wonder if God let’s ‘em come back to the earth sometimes in different shapes than when they went away. Uncle Quill wore green spectacles when he went away, but of course he couldn’t wear ‘em if he’s a bird. If this is he, he’ll be very glad to see me planting these flowers

over his grave, I can't help thinking it is he, for it keeps saying, "Dear me! dear me!" and Uncle Quill was always saying that! I—"

Hearing footsteps approaching, she paused abruptly, and rose to her feet. A rough-looking sailor, wearing a canvas jacket, a huge glazed sou'wester, and a pair of duck pants, emerged from behind a clump of shrubbery, and moved toward her. Frightened by his weather-beaten face, which was disfigured by a nose of enormous proportions, she turned to run, but was checked by his voice.

"Avast there, little gal!" he exclaimed, "it's a decided 'new-for-wrong'—your running away from me. I wouldn't hurt ye for the world. You are one of the most inimical little fairies I ever saw, and your sex is my 'forty,' and has been ever since I buried my three wives! I've been a watching ye for some time, from behind yonder bit of shrubbery, and there's a familiar item in your looks that has excited my disinterestedness in a manner which I may say is highly ingenious."

He was now in front of her, and, stooping, he clasped her hand in his great horny palm. She trembled, and glanced timidly up into his face.

"I've seen ye before," he continued; "to speak more chronologically, I've seen somebody that bore a striking resemblance to your pretty figure-head! It was years ago, aboard a merchantman of which I was mate. The one I have realization to was a young gal—one of the loveliest, and at the same time one of the most unper-spicious of her sex. She was the only one of her sex who ever ruffled my penetration. She deceived me mightily; she did, with regard to her afflictions, which I thought was concentrated in the lieutenant of a sloop-of-

war, when in reality they was emerged in my second mate, Guy Loring."

"Why, that's papa's name!" cried the little girl, clapping her hands, and laughing delightedly. "I have heard papa speak of a Mr. Block, and—"

"Which means me!" interrupted the mate, slapping the tombstone with his disengaged palm. "Ay ay, and this is a happy meeting: it's what I call sarcumstantial evidence. I've been a hunting up your father and mother for the last three days; having come home from a long v'yage a week ago! And—why shiver me little gal! what does this mean" he suddenly added, as his glance suddenly fell upon the inscription on the tombstone, "here's the name of one of my crew of the old Rainbow! It isn't possible though, that—"

"Uncle Quill was buried here!" interrupted the little girl; "he was a real nice man, and used to come to see us very often. I liked him very much, and so did brother Robert, and Tommy, and Harry, and—"

"Avast! avast there, little gal! You don't mean to say that so many little jolly-boats has sprung up already around your father and mother! You don't mean to say that there are more than three of ye?"

"There are five," answered the child, "counting the baby."

Block placed a finger upon the end of his nose, and gave vent to a shrill, prolonged whistle, which so startled his little companion, that she made a movement as if she would run away.

"Hold on fairy!" he exclaimed, "don't be frightened. You took away my breath, that was all, seeing as the three Mrs. Blocks altogether wasn't half as lucky as them that's your parents. Ay, ay," he continued, as he again

looked at the tombstone, "that was the name of one of my crew, but if it's your uncle, I—"

"Oh, no!" interrupted the child, "he wasn't our real uncle. We haven't any real uncle, but we called him so because we liked him so much, and because he wore green spectacles!"

"That was him! that was the professor, sure enough!" cried Block, emphatically, "there's no mistake upon that p'int. And so he's dead—the professor is dead! I always thought he'd die an 'arly death, as too much l'arnin' makes a man top-heavy!" saying which, the mate felt his own rough head, and moved it up and down in a reflective manner.

"Have you got the headache?" the child anxiously inquired, looking up; "I hope you haven't, Mr. Block, I hope—"

"Oh, no," interrupted the mate, "I was only a-thinkin' that, to use a clerical impression, I too might soon be a going, as the pile of eddicated dictionary tarms in my brain is so enormous that they can never evaporate! But come," he added, rubbing his club nose energetically, as though he would thus dissipate his gloomy thoughts, "you must pilot me to your parents' house, little one, where I hope we'll have a pleasant time talking over our antiquated times!"

Accordingly the little girl led the way from the graveyard, and along a narrow road bordered by oaks and button-wood trees of gigantic growth. The sun had nearly set, and the red light streaming through the branches and leaves fell softly upon the golden hair of the child, and seemed to encircle it with a halo of glory. She ran on ahead of her follower with the buoyant step of health, and soon arrived before the gate of a tasteful-looking

building of cedar-wood, and half-buried in clambering vines and flowers. Seated upon a balcony in front were Grace and her husband, the former looking levelier even than she did ten years previously, and the latter also much improved. Guy was reading a newspaper, and his handsome wife was playing with a chubby little infant upon her lap, while other children sported around her chair.

"Oh ma! oh, papa!" shouted Block's little pilot, running towards the piazza, here is Mr. Block come to see you. The same Mr. Block that you've spoken about so much!"

With a bound, Guy sprang into the yard, and seizing the mate's hand with a true sailor grasp, shook it heartily, while he shouted a joyful welcome to his old messmate. Grace seemed equally glad to see him, and forgetting his dignity as a man of profound erudition, Block unconsciously danced a sort of hornpipe, as he fixed his admiring eyes upon the young matron.

"Ay, ay!" he exclaimed, roaring with delighted laughter. "Ay, ay, here we three are again once more reunited as we was aboard the merchantman and sloop-of-war. The ways of Providence is truly unscrupulous and divine. Why, Miss Grace—or Mrs. Grace, as I should now say—you improve with age, like a bottle of wine, though you ain't so very old neither—not half as old as either of the Mrs. Blocks was when she died. Long life to ye, say I, and long life to the little jolly-boats and all. Blow me, Loring, but this incongruous tempting display that I see around me—them little rosy children, and you and your wife, which I am now introducing upon—have somehow set my head in a whirl, and made me think of taking a fourth Mrs. Block!"

"I should advise you to do so by all means!" laughed Guy. "Your own experience must tell you that there is nothing like marriage to cure a man of his roving propensities!"

"Ay, ay, chum, you are right there! I need an ingenious companion to settle me down, and I shall sartainly take your advice."

The mate kept his word. After passing three pleasant days with Guy and his wife, he took his departure, and making his way to the town of Jamaica with all possible speed, proposed to a little widow who had once rejected him on account of his enormous nose, but who now, with the unaccountable capriciousness of her sex, accepted him without hesitation. She made him a good wife, and in due course of time presented him with a pair of little twin Blocks. The nose of each was clubbed like that of the father, and the latter was much pleased to trace other points of resemblance to himself in the faces of the two.

When they became old enough to read, their father purchased a huge English dictionary, and ordered them to study it until they had mastered all the long and high-sounding words it contained. Accordingly, the little Blocks applied themselves diligently to their task, and by the time they were ten years of age, their remarkable precocity was the talk of the whole neighbourhood. Hopping like little toads around the chairs of elderly visitors, they would astonish the latter by uttering such words as "philosophical," "propugnation," "proselytism," "pyrotechnist," and—

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